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Gnome

STAND by this autumn for the exciting, new-format *Private Eye*. In keeping with the revolution which is now sweeping through the newspaper industry, *Private Eye* will now be adopting a new, compact, easy-to-handle format, based on the celebrated East German news weekly *Der Rusbridger*. We have invested £90 million in new presses, which will give Britain's oldest surviving satirical fortnightly, the *Manchester Private Eye* (established 1872), the appearance and feel of a forward-looking, European-style newsheet fit for the 21st Century.

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- A4 size
- 40 pages
- Photo with bubble on cover
- Er...
- ....that's it.

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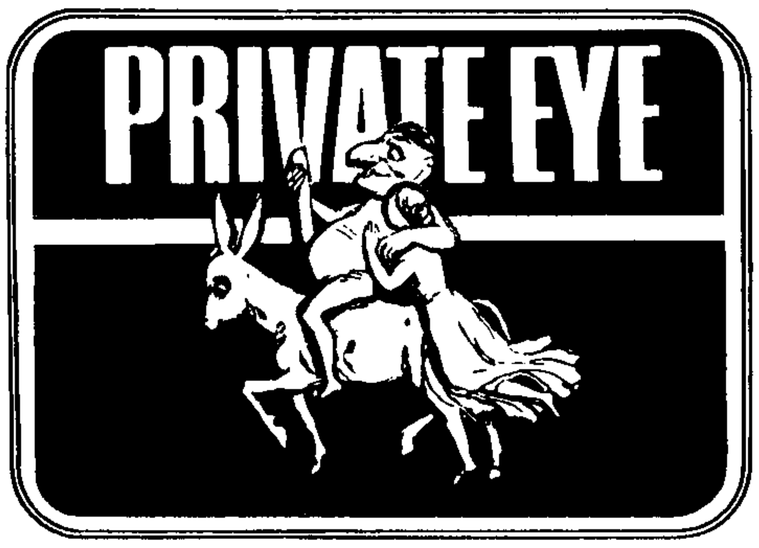

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WOULD Cherie Blair have accepted her invitation to open a shopping centre for Francis Yeoh's YTL conglomerate in Malaysia if she had read *Private Eye* more closely?

The *Eye* has been writing about Mr Yeoh since May 2002 (see "Yeoh-ho-ho", *Eye* 1052) when YTL took over Wessex Water. As we pointed out, both Francis Yeoh and YTL are very close to Malaysia's authoritarian leader Dr Mahathir. On one occasion Yeo arranged a private concert with Pavarotti for the opera-loving Dr Mahathir, and on another he staged a rerun of the Three Tenors concert for the Malaysian premier.

YTL's unbounded generosity has, however, sometimes raised eyebrows. When it bought Wessex Water, for example, Wessex's outgoing boss, Colin Skellett, had an awful lot of explaining to do after he received a handy personal payment for £920,000 from the company. For some reason police in the UK decided this was a bribe, the money not going to Wessex but being originally destined for an offshore account in the Isle of Man! Happily Mr Skellet was exonerated completely when YTL explained it was simply paying him in advance (in one lump sum) for a five-year consultancy. So Cherie Blair needn't worry when she accepts the YTL shilling (or five) in Malaysia.

"AFRICA is on the agenda," says the Beeb's in-house propaganda journal *Ariel*, with a ridiculous puff for the BBC's coverage of Africa. "It's a big job and the BBC's global reputation for truth and honesty depends on it being done well."

What a shame, then, that inside the same mag appeared the following story: "Thanks to the 15 percent cuts imposed by Mark Thompson, the bureau in Senegal is going to close. Now it has gone, big stories (like those that broke in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Ivory Coast) will have to be covered by staff flown in from long distance. A bit of a Catch 22, as the costs will be considerable and the lack of specialist knowledge a handicap."

Newsweek screwed up. Nearly everyone admits that, including the magazine's editors, who retracted an inadequately sourced report that U.S. interrogators had flushed a Korean down the toilet at Guantanamo Bay.

Yomiuri Shimbun

LORD Saatchi, the Tory party co-chairman, likes to keep his media appearances to a minimum and his performance on Monday's *Today* programme showed why.

A discussion of his newly-published pamphlet for the Centre for Policy Studies, which was supposed to give some guidance for the future of the Tory party, soon turned into a mazey peroration on war, business and Tom Cruise. "Every brand must have a consistent strategic focus," he said, a statement entirely contradicted by his ramblings.

Saatchi criticised Tony Blair for using a historically-tainted piece of rhetoric in the election campaign: "He [Blair] maybe forgot, or he didn't know, that the last person to use those actual words was Chairman Mao." A moment later, Saatchi said of the next Tory leader, "Forward, not back." He maybe forgot, or he didn't know, that the last people to use those actual words were the Labour party. It was their election advertising slogan, as the Tory's campaign manager and supposed ad guru should probably have known.

THE London School of Economics report on the cost of identity cards provoked home secretary Charles Clarke to denounce the idea that ID cards could cost £300 each as "simply mad."

If so, there must be a rash of insanity among galley slaves at the UK passport agency: word from inside the agency is that their own projections show the cost of ID cards to be, er, £300 per card.

Apparently no one has seen fit to tell ministers that the £300 figure has long been the basis of the agency's calculations. The high cost of the card seems entirely probable given the government's atrocious record on IT procurement. The government itself concedes that the current suggested price of £93 is only indicative and is, of course, the culmination of an awful lot of projected price rises since a £35 price tag was first mooted.

Number crunchings

€11.5 billion

■ EU agricultural subsidies received yearly by France

■ combined EU agricultural subsidies received yearly by UK, Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Portugal and Sweden.

REB-8
MAKE EUROPE HISTORY

NEWS

"BAN These Witchcraft Churches," Diane Abbott MP thundered on the *Evening Standard*'s leader page following the recent case involving an eight-year-old African girl in London who was thought to be possessed by demons.

Abbott called for official registration and supervision of the new "fringe" evangelical churches which are so popular among some black people in Britain's inner cities. "Multiculturalism is one thing, but I draw the line at being asked to respect the views of people who believe in demonic possession."

One of the fastest-growing evangelical churches in Europe happens to be in Abbott's own borough of Hackney – which may explain why she turned up at the Kingsway International Christian Centre (KICC) on the Sunday before the 2001 general election, brandishing a bible and informing the congregation that she had helped KICC get planning permission for a new 4,000-seat arena.

KICC's website has a section on "deliverance" which includes the following exhortations: "Cast out every demonic squatter… Take authority over every ancestral spirit working against your family… Break the hold of every generational curse on your future… Cancel the impact of every family curse to the tenth generation… Break the hold of every satanic bondage over your children."

Abbott might say that "satanic bondage over your children" isn't the same as accusing children of being witches. But the "prayer requests" from KICC worshippers suggest the distinction is blurred, to say the least: one woman asks for "release of every curse on my marriage and witchcraft of my mother-in-law". And the "deliverance" riffs above clearly indicate a belief in demonic possession – which, as we now know, she draws the line at. So what was she doing attending another gala event at KICC only last month?

BANGLADESH's victory over Australia in the one-day cricket series last week did not go unnoticed at Respect party headquarters, with Bethnal Green and Bow MP George Galloway rushing out a press release congratulating the team on their courage, strength and indefatigability.

"George Galloway last night gave his very strong congratulations to the Bangladesh cricket team on their historic victory," ran the missive, which the national press scandalously failed to pick up on. "They have utterly refuted their critics" it went on, and then it went on for quite a lot longer.

Galloway, who lists "boxing and football" among his interests in *Who's Who*, had hitherto managed to keep his enthusiasm for cricket a secret. The only occasion on which he has expressed an interest in the sport in the past was in 1996, when as MP for Glasgow Hillhead he issued a furious denunciation of the BBC in Scotland for screening coverage of a golf championship instead of a test match between England and Pakistan.

Street Of Shame

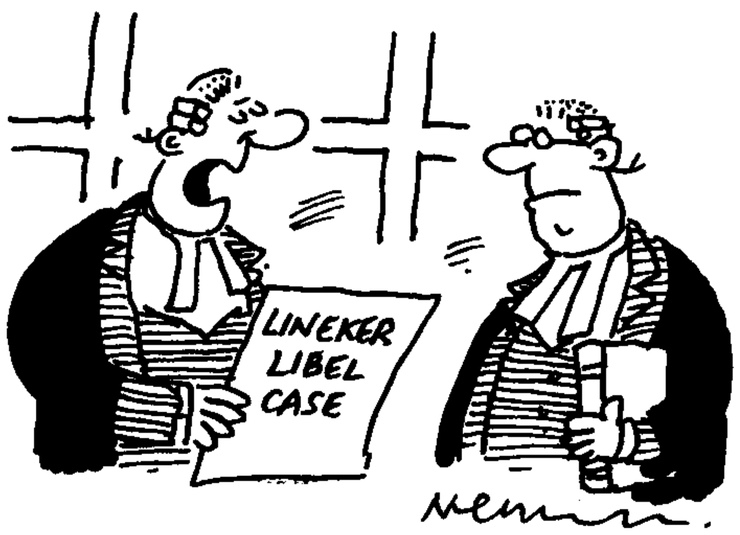
TESTIFYING in Harry Kewell's libel case against the *Sunday Telegraph* last week, Gary Lineker admitted that he doesn't actually write his column in the paper.

Readers may have guessed as much – although, for the little matter of £120,000, perhaps he could learn to put one word in front of another. But the interesting thing was his excuse: he blamed television commitments for his inability to produce copy off his own bat.

Funny, that. Michael Atherton has far more demanding TV commitments during Test matches – hours at a stretch in the C4 box. Yet he somehow manages to produce a far longer (and better) *Sunday Telegraph* column than Lineker's, and to write every word of it himself.

Atherton is an exception, however, as professional sports hacks are increasingly being replaced by celebs who demand ghost-writers. Alan Hansen, Lineker's fellow pundit on *Match of the Day*, receives a six-figure fee from the *Daily Telegraph* for his column, which is cobbled together by a reporter from 15 minutes on the phone.

While handing out these vast sums to ex-pros who can't be fagged to write their own stuff, the *Telegraph* group has just sacked 90 journalists, with more to follow.



"Two million quid for very little work – what's wrong with that?"

"IF YOU take a look at leading companies, whether they be BP or Tesco, Coca-Cola or British Airways, they all communicate superbly."

Thus former *Sun* editor David Yelland, in an *Observer* piece on 29 May. What he omitted to mention, as we revealed in the last *Eye*, is that the man in charge of Coca-Cola's communications is David Yelland – whose PR firm won the contract earlier this year just after he wrote another gushing tribute to Coca-Cola without declaring an interest.

After such a virtuoso display, what would he do for an encore? One clue is a piece Yelland wrote about Tesco for the *Times* last year: "A great company… brilliant… great leadership from Sir Terry Leahy, the chief executive… superb." But he had one slight reservation: "The only thing missing, I think, is that Tesco doesn't push its image for quality… But with a company now valued at £18.2bn and with near-perfect communications, I would not bet against Tesco transforming its old, tatty image totally."

Lo and behold, Tesco announced on 9 June that it too has hired David Yelland as its PR consultant. He will give "strategic advice" to Sir Terry Leahy on how to improve the company's image.

Yelland and Tesco had been discussing the deal for "several months" – which means that when he gave the company a gratuitous puff on 29 May for its superb communications, he was already deep in negotiations. Superb indeed.

ON 9 June the lead story in the *Evening Standard*'s Londoner's Diary claimed that the Queen was giving her "seal of approval" to financier Christopher Moran's palace on the Thames. This is Crosby Hall, the still cordoned-off monstrosity that sits on Cheyne Walk in Chelsea.

The following day the *Standard* carried a picture of Moran and the Queen, who had visited Crosby Hall the night before. But nowhere in the second puff could one find any reference to Brenda giving her seal of approval to either Moran or his palace. The reason being that the original Londoner's Diary story was piffle.

Before writing about Moran, hacks at the *Standard* would do well to check his record. They will find that in 1982 this "financier" became the first person in 300 years to be voted out of Lloyd's of London – and disbarred for life – for "discreditable conduct"; that in 1986 he was censured by the London stock exchange for his role in the transfer of shares in PR company Good Relations; and that in 2002 he was fined $2m by a New York court after the securities and exchange commission (SEC) fingered him for insider dealing. He also has the rare honour of having been turned down by the Tory party when he offered to fund a right-wing think-tank, the modestly named "Christopher Moran Foundation".

It is a mystery to many at Associated Newspapers why the *Standard* continues to promote this sleazy spiv: as we noted in *Eye* 1103, it has printed countless flattering stories about him in recent years. Perhaps editor Veronica Wadley should hire her husband, top investigative sleuth Tom Bower, to find out what lies behind the ceaseless puffery.

"ANDREW Pierce is on holiday," the *Times* informed readers two weeks ago, explaining the absence of its usual diarist.

"Andrew Pierce is away" would be the customary wording, especially as Pierce wasn't actually on holiday but had been given a few days off to prepare a long profile of Tory action-man David Davis. Why the deception?

Pierce, it seems, was particularly keen that his stand-in shouldn't know the real reason for his absence. For the stand-in was young *Times* hack Hugo Rifkind – whose father happens to be one of Davis's main rivals for the Tory leadership.

GUY ADAMS, editor of the *Independent*'s diary column Pandora, has clearly learned from his experience at the *Telegraph*, where his parting gesture was to land the paper with an £80,000 bill after printing entirely fictitious comments about Tony Blair which he claimed had been made by Barbara Cassani. Now he is careful to use genuine quotes – but just put them in as misleading a context as possible.

"There are the makings of a wonderfully public row between David Schwimmer and his West End co-star Catherine Tate," the column reported on 17 June. "With flagrant disregard for the saccharine conventions of show business, Tate has informed the *New Statesman* that she's on virtual no-speakers with her famous colleague… her relationships with the *Friends* star has now 'reached the point of no return. I've got a funny feeling I'm just being rude… It's as much as I can do to smile at the man'… Golly!"

Tate's diary in the *Staggers* does indeed use those words – but only as the climax to a lengthy luvvie-ish rant about how she was so "ridiculously happy" to be working with an actor she so "hugely admired" that she feared she had overdone her efforts to appear cool in his presence. The fact that this was obvious to anyone who actually bothered to read the piece did not deter the *Daily Mail* ("Friends? Not Exactly.") or the *Mirror* ("Not good Friends, then?") from printing fulsome follow-ups to the *Independent*'s fiction.

O·B·N

"Erin, [O'Connor] please don't despair. You are elegant, endearing, intelligent, witty, warm, gracious, gentle, gorgeous, smart, successful, down-to-earth and fashion fabulous. God, we don't even know you, but we love you!"

Sunday Times Style magazine

Submitted by Felicity Anderson

£10 paid for entries put forward for the Order of the Brown Nose.

JUST FANCY THAT!

"Many people in their last working years will have to do humbler jobs than they have been used to, for less pay. This will be hard for fat cats to get used to, but it seems inevitable and right."

– *Max Hastings, former editor of the* Daily Telegraph *and* Evening Standard, *now freelancing for the* Guardian, *13 June.*

THE *Mail on Sunday* reported last weekend that "millionaire entrepreneur" Edward Davenport, best known for running hooray parties such as the notorious Gatecrasher Balls, is in a spot of financial bother.

A property firm he owns is facing a winding up order from one of its disgruntled investors. In the petition the aggrieved investor claims that the Davenport company is "insolvent and unable to pay its debts".

Could this be the same *Mail on Sunday* which in its last absurd "Rich Report" stated that Davenport – who was once sentenced to nine months in prison for VAT evasion, though later released on appeal – was worth £130m? Afraid so.

IN THE week that regional newspaper journalists converged on the Newspaper Society AGM to protest at starting salaries as low as £12,000 for those working on daily and weekly papers, one very well-paid job in local journalism went up for grabs.

London mayor Ken Livingstone is advertising for a news and features editor for *The Londoner*, the free-sheet that is (in theory at least) delivered to all his constituents to keep them up to date on what he has been doing with their money.

One lucky hack with "significant experience of news and feature writing for a high profile national or local newspaper" will pull in a salary of £42,437 (considerably more than 75 percent of journalists earn) in return for producing less than 20 pages of Pravda-like editorial once every two months, with the assistance of two other staff.

The £3m a year of public money the mayor spends on the "newspaper" was one of the main sticking points in negotiations over his proposals for a 7.2 percent increase in the council tax levy last January. Two thirds of London assembly members demanded the paper be scrapped, only to back down when Livingstone reduced his demand to a mere 5.5 percent increase in the cash he receives from every household.

WRITING a lengthy piece in the *Daily Mirror* two days after Michael Jackson was cleared of child abuse, PR man Julian Henry made it clear that the pop prince was not welcome in his office.

"He could fly in specially from California, hammer at my door and fall to his knees begging for help. But there's no way I'd take on Michael Jackson as a public relations client."

Given that recent beneficiaries of the services of his company Henry's House PR have included Victoria Beckham (until her career became a laughing-stock), *The Face* magazine (until it folded) and TV programmes *The Big Breakfast* and *The Block* (prior to their cancellation), it is possible Henry's name might not be at the top of Jacko's "to call" list.

EVERYONE knows fashion is fickle, but quite how quickly styles change was evident in the *Sunday Mirror*'s "Celebs" supplement on 12 June.

"We reckon it's time loved-up scruffy couple Keira Knightley and Jamie Dornan went shopping," declared the magazine on page 19. "A pretty scarf won't hide the fact Keira's out in scruffy denim again".

Page 31 also featured a picture of Knightley in scarf and jeans – alongside advice to readers on "how to get the same fab style for a fraction of the cost".

HACKWATCH

So, farewell then Dominic Lawson...

"THE extraordinary survival powers of Dominic Lawson are being stretched to the limit," the *Eye* reported a fortnight ago, predicting that soon "it may be Lawson's turn to clear his desk". Within a week he was gone.

The *Sunday Telegraph* editor arrived for work last Tuesday at his usual leisurely hour and told his deputy Matthew d'Ancona to chair the morning conference while Dominic himself answered a summons from managing director Murdoch MacLennan, supposedly to discuss the Gary Lineker libel case. He disappeared upstairs and was never seen again. His secretary was despatched to collect his laptop and jacket, as he'd been banned from returning to his office.

Lawson seemed astonished by his dismissal. Perhaps he hadn't read the latest *Eye*, which pointed out that he had managed to antagonise both his new managing director (who was livid at the sacking of executive editor Con Coughlin) and his new proprietors (the devoutly Catholic Barclays, who took umbrage at a news story suggesting Jesus was gay, which Lawson ran on the very weekend of the Pope's death).

But these were merely the last in a series of offences. When the Barclays took charge last year they told him that his priority should be to "sort out" the *Sunday Telegraph*. For months he claimed that a redesign was in progress, but whenever MacLennan asked for details Lawson seemed oddly vague – perhaps because he was spending much of his time on a far more important project: a plot to become editor of the *Daily Telegraph*.

From his pet executives at the Sunday paper he had assembled a "dream team" to assist him in the coup – Susannah Herbert (who would be deputy editor at the daily), Topaz Amoore (who'd take charge of the Saturday magazine) and Richard Ellis (to become news supremo).

The Barclays and MacLennan finally wearied of Lawson's ceaseless scheming. Aidan Barclay's wife, Fizzy, could hardly attend a charity event in London without being cornered by Lawson's wife, Rosa Monckton, and lectured on the necessity of appointing her brilliant husband as editor of the *Daily Telegraph*.

Dominic's own attempts to schmooze Aidan Barclay never recovered from a disastrous start. When the Barclay family bought the papers, Aidan and his silent brother Howard called Lawson to see them in Conrad Black's old office. Alas! Despite having been editor for nine years, Lawson struggled to locate the room – finding himself in the canteen at one point – and arrived, highly flustered, 15 minutes late. He burst into the office and, in pure Mr Bean fashion, rushed straight through another door – into a walk-in coat cupboard. "Got lost, have we?" Aidan Barclay sniggered.

Lawson's subsequent attempts to make out that he was best mates with Aidan were undermined by his desperate attempts to pump genuine friends of the Barclays for information. In February he bought lunch for Lord Powell, and spent the entire meal pleading: "What do they think of me?"

He knows now. Lawson tried to cheer himself up by throwing a party at his house in Graham Terrace, off Sloane Square, last Tuesday night, with smoked salmon nibbles rustled up by loyal sister Nigella. But it was all too much for Rosa Monckton, who made an overwrought speech about man's inhumanity to man. "How could anyone treat him like this?" she wailed. Mrs Lawson became even more hysterical when *Sunday Telegraph* Focus editor Jacqui Fuller pulled out a camera to take a souvenir team-photo. "You're invading our privacy!" she screamed.

Lawson spent the rest of the week ringing sympathetic editors such as Piers "Morgan" Moron of *Press Gazette* and Simon Kelner of the *Independent*. But even their sympathy had its limits. During a long Lawsonian rant about how appalling it was to sack a man after many years of loyal service, Kelner interrupted: "But, er, isn't that what you did to Con Coughlin?"

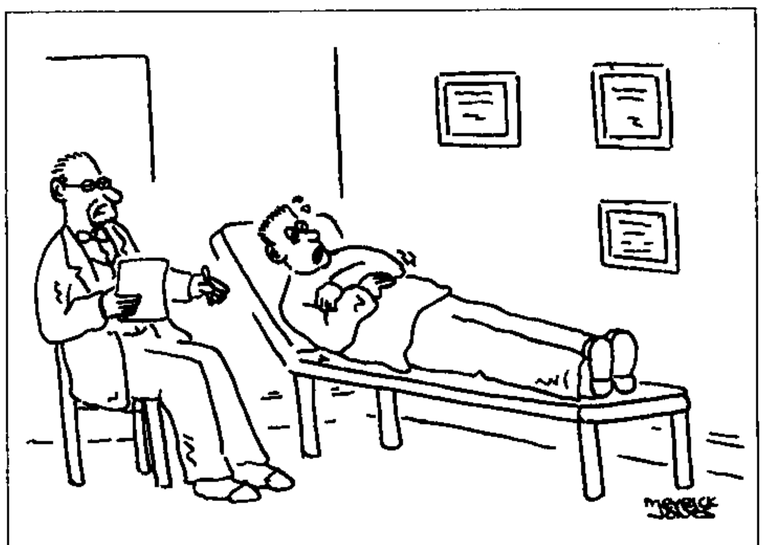
Still, at least Lawson's successor Sarah Sands admires him. "Dominic has been a terrific talent-spotter," she declared in her introductory speech to *Sunday Telegraph* hacks last week. "If I were to construct a fantasy newspaper team it would look like this one." Well, perhaps not *quite* like it. The first thing Lawson did on becoming editor, a decade ago, was to sign up Irish columnist Kevin Myers; the first thing Sands did last week was to get rid of him.

Sands also knows that the fantasy team she's inherited includes several members of Lawson's own dream team with which he planned to seize power at the daily paper – including the woman who was due to take Sands's job there had the coup succeeded.

And what of the deputy whom Sands has inherited at the *Sunday Telegraph*? "I have long admired Matthew d'Ancona's work," she said last week. "It is thrilling now to work alongside him." But d'Ancona may be rather less thrilled, having endured 10 thankless years as Lawson's number two on the understanding that he would be rewarded with the top job eventually. The donnish d'Ancona will probably take up a more congenial berth soon as editor of the *Spectator*, and Boris Johnson will have to find another sinecure.

Which leaves only one question: is the perennially jittery *Daily Telegraph* editor Martin "Newboy" Newland secure at last? Emphatically not. Andrew "Brillo" Pad Neill is lobbying the Barclays to give Newland's job to *Times* business editor Patience Wheatcroft. But Murdoch MacLennan favours a more surprising candidate – former *Sun* showbiz hack Martin Dunn, who now runs New York's *Daily News* tabloid. Dunn's colleagues in New York say he has already been approached.

He may have an eccentric CV for a *Torygraph* editor – his former boss Kelvin Mackenzie dubbed him "the Patsy Kensit of journalism" – but Dunn has one big advantage. He was in charge of "new media" at Associated Newspapers in the late 1990s while MacLennan was the group's managing director, and they have been great mates ever since.



"That foul-mouthed voice that keeps telling you what to do...? I'm afraid that really is Bob Geldof"

Number crunchings

200,000

■ number of Iraqis forcibly removed from southern marshlands which Tony Blair cited as one of his reasons for invasion of Iraq

■ number of Zimbabweans forcibly removed from urban areas in last month

"I AM NOT ruling myself in or out, I am just trying to lead a debate about the future of the Conservative party and I hope others join in," says Tory MP David "Two Brains" Willetts.

But after an interview in the *Guardian* and various keynote speeches, he seems to be devoting at least part of his mighty cerebrum to preparing for a leadership run.

It would be most unfortunate, then, if anyone were to remind voters of the last time he made the front pages. That was back in 1996 when it emerged that Willetts, as a government whip, had tried the nobble the parliamentary select committee investigating allegations of sleaze against fellow Tory MP Neil Hamilton.

Attempting to ingratiate himself with the senior whips, Willetts wrote a memo in which he proposed "exploiting the good Tory majority" on the committee to ensure that Hamilton was cleared. Failing that, he argued that they should try delaying the inquiry until after the libel suit brought by Hamilton against the *Guardian* had been settled, ie after the 1997 election. This followed a conversation, Willetts claimed, with Geoffrey Johnson Smith, a member of the committee.

When the memo was leaked and Willetts himself was forced to appear before the Commons standards and privileges committee, he blamed it on a misunderstanding based on his relative innocence as a whip. That, however, did not stop Conservative MP Quentin Davies from telling him: "What you've said in the memo is 180 degrees wide of what you now say two years later. The defence you've just put up is absolutely not plausible. We have to come to the conclusion either you were deceiving your colleagues in the whips' office or you are trying to deceive this committee now."

Johnson Smith also denied Willetts's account of their conversation. The committee's report expressed its concern that "any member should dissemble in his account", and concluded that Willetts's response "has aggravated the original offence". He resigned as paymaster-general shortly afterwards.

Now he appears as the new broom who'll sweep away the Tories' old image problems. Shome mishtake, shurely?

WITH what seems like almost all the 197 conservative MPs having declared their intention to stand in the leadership election, it is perhaps unsurprising that not everyone at party HQ is taking the contest entirely seriously.

As one party worker wryly commented after shadow foreign secretary Liam Fox threw his hat into the ring: "He's very confident, apparently he's got 230 definites."

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

"I've been an Asian-minded person for several years. It was on sabbatical from membership of Tony Blair's Cabinet that I began to take a keen interest in the remarkable economic and social development of your region."

– Peter Mandelson, speech to World Economic Forum meeting, Singapore, 29 April 2005.

MANY acres of space have been devoted to the so-called Warwick agreement hammered out before the election by government ministers and trade union leaders at a meeting of Labour's secretive National Policy Forum in the town of the same name.

The agreement was largely promissory, containing much feel-good talk about "family-friendly working" and the "abolition of the two-tier workforce", etc. However, it was extracted from a poorly briefed, shambolic group of ministers, including the hopeless "Patsy" Patricia Hewitt by unions who for once had caught the government on the hop. Anxious for large amounts of union money in the run-up to the election, Tony Blair promised them that "Warwick would be implemented in full!"

But the Dear Leader and his acolytes are already dragging their feet. For a start, the queen's speech contained no commitment to implement the agreement, and now a leaked brief from within Labour high command (written by a trade unionist seconded to the party) suggests that once again the Dear Leader is thinking the "unthinkable". He wants to ensure that the party's already Byzantine policymaking process is divorced even further from the unions so that he, or his successors, can't be ambushed again.

Party chairman Ian Mccartney will be given the job of reassuring the unions that none of the above will happen. Meanwhile union chiefs will huff and puff, but as usual, they won't blow the house down. And the Warwick agreement itself? Much of it will quietly gather dust.

"I bought a place on eBay"

AS *Eye* 1133 reported, government spending on consultants (the ones to whom it doesn't give jobs) has shot up to nearly £2bn a year. Austin Mitchell MP has tabled parliamentary questions to each department asking who they are, with responses suggesting that for a government committed to efficiency there is little control.

The ministry of defence said it doesn't keep records of the consultants used; while the department for education explained that the information could only be provided at "disproportionate cost" (unlike, presumably, the consultants' entirely proportionate fees). The environment department was more forthcoming – naming 95 different consultancy firms used in 2002/03 alone.

THE task of coordinating the government's "consultation" on smoking in public places has fallen to home office minister Caroline Flint.

The studiously on-message Flint is as militantly against smoking today as she was once militantly in favour of it as a graduate student at the University of East Anglia. Then a dungareed feminist, Flint was rarely spotted without fag in hand.

There is no doubt Flint would now like to see an all-out ban on smoking – although how this will go down in the working men's clubs in her ex-mining constituency in Yorkshire is another matter.

Then there is the vexed issue of Britain's Moslem minority, and a predilection among some to smoke hookah pipes in restaurants. "Flint bans hookahs shock"?

THE TORIES have tried to make much political capital out of Cherie Blair's £30,000 fee for a lecture in the US in which she discussed her book about life at No 10, *In the Goldfish Bowl*.

Shadow leader of the House Chris Grayling has accused Mrs Blair of "using her husband's job to make money. She needs clearly to take a step back and say, 'Perhaps I have made a mistake'." Grayling was backed by the *Sun*, *Express* and *Daily Mail*.

Contrast this with the reaction from the Tories and their friends in the press the last time a premier's wife took advantage of her position for a book deal. When Norma Major published *Chequers*, her history of the prime ministerial stately home, in 1996, and embarked on a round of radio, television and press interviews (shortly before the 1997 election), these resolute critics of sleaze produced neither a bang nor even a whimper.

MORE evidence emerges that one-time right-wing Tory boy John Bercow is undergoing a Damascene conversion to the delights of "new" Labour: he is now writing to party supporters.

Bercow, a prime mover in the Federation of Conservative Students in the mid-1980s, saw the error of his ways and shopped some of his more militant colleagues to then Tory party chairman, Norman Tebbit. They were all expelled while Bercow moved to a safe seat in parliament.

In recent years, however, the Buckingham MP has mellowed further. And members of Buckingham Labour party were recently surprised to receive the following letter from local organisers: "We are arranging two trips in our events calendar this year," read the circular. "Visit to the Houses of Parliament. John Bercow MP has kindly agreed to arrange a tour for up to 16 people. Tours are held on Fridays."

THE NHS may have its problems but there's no bed crisis for ministers at the department of health.

The DoH has booked 100 rooms at the swanky Grove Hotel in Watford for an "informal" meeting of EU health ministers that health secretary Patricia Hewitt will host this October.

As well as the rooms and generous meeting facilities, ministers will be able to enjoy the top class spa and restaurants at the hotel, at an estimated cost to taxpayers of around £500,000.

Sadly, this is likely to cause envious glances down the road at Watford General Hospital, which is set to lose 50 beds. Bosses at West Hertfordshire Hospitals NHS Trust have announced plans to close two wards because of money problems: they are struggling with a £13m debt and face rising overspending.

EYE AWARD FOR HONESTY

HATS OFF to John Hemming, the new Lib Dem MP for Birmingham Yardley, for setting a remarkable parliamentary precedent within weeks of his arrival in the House.

Hemming is now known as the Brummie Superstud following last weekend's news that he has impregnated his mistress – and his wife's subsequent revelation that this is his 26th mistress during their 23-year marriage. That isn't the parliamentary precedent, of course: it's par for the course. Nor is the fact that his wife is standing by him.

"Although I've never been happy with the situation," she explained, "at least John has been honest with me and told me about it… John and I have an agreement where we tell each other about what is going on."

The truly startling thing is his eagerness to tell everyone else. Has any other MP ever turned up at the Coach and Horses in Soho, got hog-whimperingly drunk and then announced to a roomful of complete strangers – many of them *Eye* hacks – that he has made his mistress pregnant?

GONG BUT NOT FORGOTTEN

TONY and Gordon certainly know how to return a favour, and businessmen close to the current and future prime minister were prominent in the queen's birthday honours.

Arise retiring British Airways boss **Sir Rod Eddington** – for services to frequent flying and taking on the unions in Britain and Hong Kong, but especially for advising Gordon Brown.

A knighthood also went to Legal & General head **David Prosser**, who recently won a "victory" over the financial services authority (FSA) by reducing a £1m fine for mis-selling endowment mortgages to a mere £575,000. Prosser's Legal & General was also fined £400,000 in 1994 and was on Labour's name and shame list for pensions mis-selling. But Tony Blair has clearly "moved on": he very publicly took Prosser's side in his recent battle to cut his fine.

Others for whom past misdemeanours were put aside included **George Cox**, knighted for services to business – but not presumably for his role as senior independent director of Bradford & Bingley when it mis-sold "precipice" bonds to thousands of investors, for which it was fined £650,000 last year.

The chairman of the FSA **Callum McCarthy** will arise as Sir Callum after a couple of years welcoming many of his old colleagues in the private sector to the top of the organisation and handing out paltry penalties for scandals such as split capital trusts and Shell's reserves fiddles (see *Eyes* passim).

David Arculus was knighted too for helping the government make better regulations for business. Sir David also chairs mobile phone firm MMO_2, which is currently trying to squeeze its share of a £3bn VAT refund out of the treasury. The firm claims the chancellor should return VAT on the expensive third generation mobile phone licences it bought from the government. It needs the money badly because the phones aren't selling well.

The tax-dodging industry is also rewarded. A CBE goes to **Malcolm Gammie QC** for services to tax policy. Among his more distinguished contributions was representing Barclays as it successfully argued in the courts for £30m in tax breaks on a scam involving the lease of that essential piece of banking equipment, a gas pipeline under the Irish sea (see *Eye* 1121).

Having your firm in court, however, appears to be a qualification for an honour: **William Alexander**, chief executive of Thames Water, got a CBE even though this year alone Thames has been fined £132,000 for four separate offences of pouring oil and sewage into various rivers.

In the same week the government announced that it is to sue American computer giant EDS over the tax credits cock-up, it's time to forgive and forget other IT disasters. Thus **Alan Wood,** chairman of Siemens UK, responsible for failed IT systems to computerise asylum claims and the passport office fiasco, becomes a CBE.

Labour's claim to be tackling childhood obesity sits oddly with the OBE for **Neil Makin**. He is Cadbury Schweppes's chief lobbyist dealing with "regulatory affairs" and has addressed a number of meetings at Labour party conferences, sometimes with "chocolates provided".

Tony Allum of engineer Halcrow got a CBE for trying to drum up British business "rebuilding" Iraq. This must be seen as a consolation prize, as the combination of Bush's insistence that big contracts go to US firms and the ongoing insurgency mean Iraqi opportunities are limited. Allum was sent to Washington as leader of the government's Iraqi industry working group. While few British companies won contracts, two firms did well: Halcrow won sub-contracts from US builder Bechtel, while Olive Security (whose directors include Jonathan Allum, son of Tony) got work protecting Bechtel staff (see *Eye* 1086).

The usual spread of awards went to the arms industry, with CBEs for **Colin Green**, head of military planes for Rolls Royce, and **Adrian Mears**, retiring director of privatised high tech arms firm, QinetiQ. OBEs went to **Ken Edwards** from QinetiQ (a specialist in "sensor to shooter" targeting); **Peter McIntosh**, managing director of warship firm Vosper Thorneycroft; **Graham Benning**, vice-president of tank part maker David Brown Textron; and BAE director **Alison Wood**. MBEs went to two more BAE staff: engineer **Paul Burns;** and **David Ashcroft** who runs the "advanced technology demonstration centre".

As a boost to the ailing private finance initiative, **Robert Jennings** from PFI financier UBS followed up his secondment to the treasury with a CBE.

BRUSSELS SPROUTS

EUROPEAN leaders fighting to preserve the EU's tradition of throwing away billions of taxpayers' money on farmers and regional "development" are under attack again for – surprise, surprise – their inability to control the funds they dole out so lavishly.

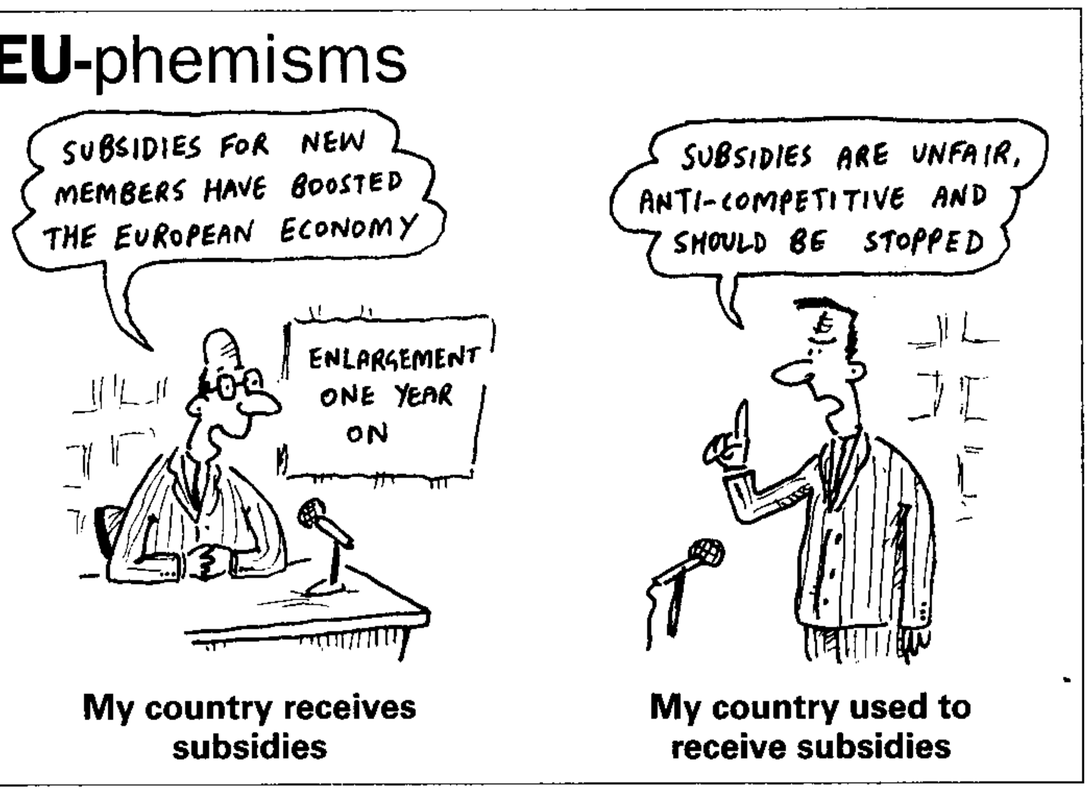
The move follows a report on the recovery of "irregular" payments made against invalid claims under the common agricultural policy (see *Eye* 1131). As if that weren't bad enough, it has now emerged that even larger sums are going astray and not being recovered.

According to a new European parliament report on budgetary control, an estimated £3.5bn of funds disappeared between 1999 and 2003. Worse, the EU's anti-fraud watchdog Olaf has so far recovered under 2 percent of that. Why can't Olaf do better? Because, it bleats, it takes around five years to conclude an investigation.

This is the usual institutional defence over EU scandals: the matter is now in hand, but please be patient! In fact as EU critics point out, the fumble over spending management has a long history. Back in 2000, for instance, the EU's own auditors reported "an unacceptable incidence of errors" for the year before.

Neil Kinnock, then reform commissioner, put a rose-tinted wash on that. While there was more to be done, he said, "we are [now] definitely heading in the right direction." And so it goes on.

EU-phemisms


SUBSIDIES FOR NEW MEMBERS HAVE BOOSTED THE EUROPEAN ECONOMY
ENLARGEMENT ONE YEAR ON
My country receives subsidies
SUBSIDIES ARE UNFAIR, ANTI-COMPETITIVE AND SHOULD BE STOPPED
My country used to receive subsidies

Down on the Farm

THE bovine TB crisis is rapidly becoming the biggest scandal in British agriculture. The number of cattle herds going down with the disease has soared this year by a further 30 percent.

Within a few years, it seems that in large parts of the west country, from Cornwall to Gloucestershire, every single herd will be under a restriction order, making it impossible for farmers to earn a living. The bill to taxpayers, for compensating farmers whose infected animals must be slaughtered, is well on course to hit Defra's own estimated total of £2bn within nine years.

The evidence is now overwhelming that the cause of the TB epidemic in cattle is TB in Britain's exploding badger population. Equally overwhelming, since the "Irish study", is the evidence that the only effective way to halt the epidemic would be a cull of infectious badgers. The number of vets who have signed the famous letter to that effect, addressed to Margaret Beckett (aka Rosa Klebb), has now risen to 420, including some of the most respected veterinary scientists in the country.

The response of Beckett and her minion Ben Bradshaw has been to behave like a pair of frightened jellies. They are terrified by the outcry which would follow from the animal rights lobby if they followed the vets' advice – not least thanks to that £1m "bung" the Labour party was given by the Political Animal Lobby in 1997.

But it would be a mistake to think that Rosa and Baby Ben have done nothing in the face of this disaster. On the contrary, they have done all they can to, er, avoid confronting it. But even this is starting to rebound in their faces. For a start they set up a committee, the so-called Pre-Movement Testing Stakeholder group, to look into pretty well everything except the possibility of culling sick badgers. The committee duly came up with the kind of meaningless report Defra was looking for.

But what they hadn't counted on was that one committee member, Truro livestock auctioneer Ben Messer-Bennetts, would break cover when the farce was over and protest very loudly that the whole exercise had been a stitch-up. All Defra wanted, he said, was a committee packed with "yes" men to rubber stamp its proposals. The result was a "sham" which would be "hugely damaging for the livestock industry" and "in the absence of a targeted cull" would do little to stop the spread of TB. "I believe farmers have been let down very badly," he stormed.

Even greater embarrassment, however, has engulfed Defra's other attempt at displacement activity: a three-year plan to investigate the possibility of vaccinating not cattle but badgers. Apart from the implicit admission that it is badgers which are the cause of the problem, the rug has been pulled from under this scheme by none other than Defra's favourite TB expert, Professor John Bourne. There has now resurfaced a report from a committee chaired by Bourne as recently as 2003, which poured withering scorn on the value of vaccinating badgers. At best, said Bourne's report, vaccination could only offer a 70 percent success rate, making it virtually useless. "Researchers" it went on, "have been looking for a better vaccine since the 1920s, and failed". The only effective strategy, Bourne advised, was a cull. "Dead badgers", he concluded, "don't spread disease". When even their most trusted ally lets them down like this, can Rosa and Ben hold out much longer?

'Muckspreader'

Labrador puppies. Black & yellow. Dogs & bitches. Parents hip & eye tested. Dad elbow scored. Mum family poet.

Monthly Advertiser (Ceredigion)

FIVE TV

Match of the Day: Women's Euro 2005 (BBC2)

APART from sacking a fifth of the staff and frog-marching most of the rest to Manchester, two of the promises made by the BBC to Mrs Jowell in the hope of keeping the licence fee are "diversity" and "providing programmes other broadcasters don't."

Women's football may have many disadvantages – principally a laughably low quality of play – but it handily ticks both those boxes for the executives. As in all matters of attempted diversity, the big question in reporting on women's sport is whether the treatment should be different or equal. In tennis and athletics, which are genuinely mixed games, the TV coverage is identical but with a slightly greater number of women pundits in the studio.

The coverage of **Women's Euro 2005** began with the two big gestures of keeping the same name (*Match of the Day*) and the same studio set used by the boys. A true measure of how seriously the BBC was taking it would have been the presence of the same broadcasters; but Gary Lineker was in the high court and the rest were on the hols, so Celina Hinchcliffe took the Des/Gary role with Steve Wilson commentating. Filling the Gaby Yorath position of token cross-gender interest was Gavin Peacock.

Gav, having perhaps missed European football's feminism courses, kept referring to his colleagues as "girls". But then the male game has always been a bit laddish about this side of the sport. The president of the game's organising body had a hot flush last week and started talking about how exciting it could be when women were playing football and it rained. Gavin Peacock avoided such wet t-shirt fantasies and his defence for using the vocative "girls" could be that, linguistically, the coverage was a straight swap.

While the dream of someone saying "the girl done good" went unfulfilled, we did get "she done good" and "they gonna need some quality ball from 'er in the second half". Even down to the mockney present tense – "she come into the tournament wiv an injury" – the comments were eerily interchangeable except for the s/he substitutions.

"I'm just popping out to get a life – can I get you one?"

Before the tournament, there had also been high hopes of some Colemanboobs from the commentators. While it's a relief to be spared some of the innuendos involving "balls" that the boys are prone to, certain phrases innocuous in male footie – chesting it down, keeping their shape – suddenly become explosive in this discipline. But apart from an early "oh, they might be down to ten men, oops", the pundits avoided the treacherous phrases. The only reliable smut for the school bus was a frequent reference to "knocking it between her legs".

By the day of the final, it was remarkable how familiar it all seemed. England had gone out disappointingly early and members of the team now sat rather sullenly in the studio, filling in as extra pundits. Celina, in Gary's seat, was referring to "the all too familiar German cruise to the final".

For the first time, Steve Wilson in the commentary box forgot his sexism awareness course and commended "the nice big smiles on the faces of the Denmark team". And, soon, it began to rain heavily in Blackburn so there would have been a nice big smile on the face of the UEFA president as well. Otherwise it was just like old times: the Germans seemed to have a centre forward who was not actually human but a panzer tank.

Admittedly there were fewer pony-tails and less fiddling with hair-slides than you get in the men's game these days, but it really could have been the real *Match of the Day*. Except that the football was so piss-poor.

What was astonishing about *Women's Euro 2005* was the conspiracy of silence about the quality of the play. Defensive clearances would routinely bobble up into the air while attempted passes almost always found opponents. Even non-league teams having a streaky run in the FA Cup play better than this; but neither Wilson, Peacock nor any of the women pundits dared comment on these mistakes, presumably because they were too frequent.

The encouragement of emerging sports is admirable; but the BBC and the women's football authorities can't have it both ways. They can't roll their eyes about male fantasies involving rain unless they are going to aim for equality of coverage: which means the same kind of technical scrutiny and sarcastic abuse that broadcasting brings to the men's game.

'Remote Controller'

MEDIA NEWS

FANS of schoolboy howlers enjoyed *Britain's Greatest Monarch*, Channel Five's 90 minute royal face-off on 13 June.

First, presenter Jennie Bond claimed that Edward I defeated William Wallace at the battle of Stirling Bridge – a resounding victory for the Wallace's troops, who were not beaten by the "Hammer of the Scots" until a year later at Falkirk.

Bond also described Henry V's victory at Agincourt thus: "In Shakespeare's immortal words, Henry 'let slip his dogs of war'" – a phrase which was indeed written by Shakespeare, although he put it in the mouth of Mark Antony in an entirely different play, *Julius Caesar* (Henry's beast of choice is a tiger, though he has some "greyhounds in the slips" at Harfleur).

This inaccuracy pales into insignificance, however, beside UKTV History's recent clanger in the listings on its own website: "Israel and the Arabs: The Fifty Years War. Veterans from both sides of the conflict share memories of… the Battle of the Bulge, Hitler's last-ditch attempt to stem the tide of the allied advance by launching his own push through the Ardennes forests of Belgium."

DOING the rounds to publicise *Sugar Rush*, the Channel 4 adaptation of her novel about teenage lesbians, Julie Burchill appeared to have only one thing on her mind.

"If the *Daily Mail* doesn't say 'ban this filth', I'll have failed," she told the *Radio Times* in a quote which was gleefully splashed across the magazine's cover. "If I don't make page three of the *Daily Mail* it will ruin my summer and I will be sad," she announced to the *Financial Times*, and the *Independent, Guardian, Big Issue* and *Sunday Times* also noted her aspirations to Dacre-bating.

So what did the *Mail* make of *Sugar Rush* when it finally hit our screens? Other than choosing a photo of its picturesque lead Lenora Crichlow to decorate its television listings page on the day the series began, absolutely nothing.

A STUDY released by children's charity NCH on 7 June which suggested that one in five 11 to 19 year olds had been bullied by mobile phone was an obvious lead for Radio One's news bulletins, with harrowing testimonies from several teens who had been harassed by classmates who recorded humiliating attacks and then played them back to their mates on their phones.

The same day's Scott Mills show on the station featured the DJ's hilarious new feature "Flirt Divert", in which he encourages listeners to give a false mobile number to any "goons" who show an interest in going out with them. As he describes it on the Radio One website: "Their calls will go straight to the Flirt Divert answerphone each time. They'll leave a message. Then I'll play the messages to the nation!"

WHERE ON SUNDAY NIGHTS...
A
PICTURE
OF BRITAIN
THE BBC REMINDS US...
OF THE GRANDEUR OF A PROUD LAND...
WHICH INSPIRED THE LIKES OF CONSTABLE, TURNER & PALMER...
AND CREATED AN UNPARALLELED ARTISTIC HERITAGE...
THAT HAS TODAY LEFT US WITH...
ER... ROLF HARRIS
"Can you tell who he isn't yet?"
Ken Pyne

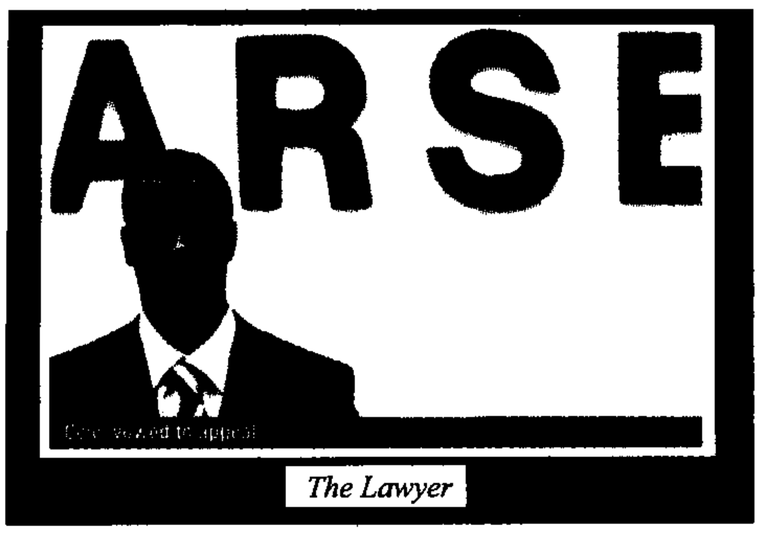
GOING LIVE

"AMAZING scenes in California," announced Huw Edwards on the BBC's *Ten O'Clock News*, before going live to cover the Michael Jackson verdict.

Unfortunately nothing was happening but the producer decided to stay with the "breaking story" anyway. So with nothing to report, the *five* reporters and correspondents standing outside the court took it in turns to interview each other.

The BBC received 216 calls from viewers after the bulletin. Not surprisingly 213 of them "felt that there was too much coverage of verdict in the Michael Jackson trial".

But given that 15.4m people now have access to the corporation's News 24, what was the point of running an all-but identical rolling news service on two channels at the same time? Either the BBC has abandoned the founding principle of News 24 – that it should provide a "Now-O-Clock News" for those unsatisfied with the twice-nightly half-hour digests of all the major stories available on BBC1 – or it has no faith that viewers will follow the exhortations to "press the red button" which are scattered through bulletins these days. In which case, why bother putting them there?



The Lawyer

THE 15 percent budget cuts at the BBC have not deterred the installation artists at White City. A "new artwork" has appeared, "made up entirely of 10,000 stickers – each one bearing a short poem".

Passers-by are invited "to peel off any sticker they take a liking to and take it with them – so the words travel literally around the community"... and straight on to the streets as litter.

OUT OF CON-TEXT

PRESS ads for the forthcoming musical based on the songs of The Smiths, *Some Girls Are Bigger Than Others*, carry a quote from the *Guardian* which seems abstruse enough to be one of the band's own lyrics: "There is a vicious beauty about the brilliant Anonymous Society."

In fact Anonymous Society is the name of the company behind the show, and the phrase "vicious beauty" appeared in a review of its work a mere six years ago. It was not, however, used to describe *Some Girls Are Bigger Than Others*, nor even the show then under discussion, but rather the work of the singer who provided its soundtrack. Lynn Gardner wrote: "There is a vicious beauty about the songs of Jacques Brel."

LUVVIES

The actor said, "It's absolutely integral to my whole career that I have the luxury of being eloquent and lucid in two languages.

"It allows me a metaphor to debate with myself.

"English actors often say they have Shakespeare, and that's another language. Well I have three: Shakespeare, English and Welsh."

RHYS IFANS, *The Daily Post*

Submitted by Philip Roberts.

OUT OF SIGHT AND SOUND

IRREPLACEABLE early films are at risk of crumbling to dust as the British Film Institute's National Film and Television makes more preservation staff redundant.

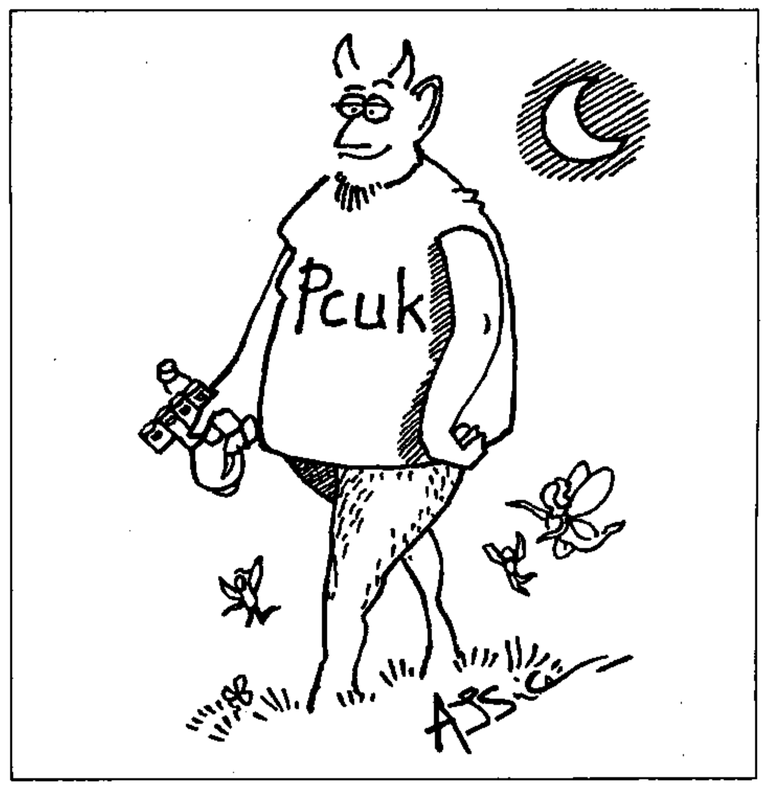
While the ancient Oxyrhynchus papyri discovered in Egypt are being recovered and decoded through technology, documents less than 100 years old may soon be lost.

In the past year the BFI has done away with 15 skilled technical posts – one third of the technicians – at the conservation centre in Berkhamsted and the cataloguing department has been closed. Yet just last month the BFI proudly announced five new management and curatorial appointments.

The BFI hopes to exploit commercially its vast collection with DVD releases and more projects like the BBC series based on the Mitchell and Kenyon collection of early films. Nothing wrong with that – and it helps fulfil the aim of improving public access to the collection. But the remaining archivists claim it is being done at the expense of urgent preservation on materials that may be of little interest to the buying public but are unique historical documents.

Even in environmentally controlled conditions, old nitrate-base film decays rapidly, and newer film starts to lose colour. Mountains of material need not only looking after but copying on to other media. America's National Film Preservation Board estimates that 90 percent of material recorded in the 1930s, including feature films, documentaries, newsreel and anthropological studies, is already gone forever.

NFTVA insiders calling themselves Custodes Lucis (Guardians of Light) have set up a website at www.filmarchiveaction.org to record their concerns about BFI policies.



DUMB BRITAIN

Weakest Link, BBC2

Anne Robinson: In the late 1970s the Lib-Lab pact was between Labour and which other political party?

Contestant: The Conservatives.

AR: Who became US president after the death of Franklin Roosevelt in 1945?

Contestant: Abraham Lincoln.

AR: What was the abbreviation used for the branch of the civil service called Military Intelligence, section 6?

Contestant: MI5.

AR: What is the only letter in the English alphabet that has three syllables?

Contestant: Z.

AD NAUSEAM

A BAD week for beer. First Boddington's, which is launching a new ad campaign through BBH that again plays on its proud Mancunian heritage.

This time round the TV spot uses the Happy Mondays' Madchester anthem "Step On" to make the point. Unfortunately this has gone down like a dodgy pint among the 60 workers who lost their jobs in January when InBev, Boddingtons' current owner, closed the 200-year-old Strangeways' brewery: 90 percent of Boddingtons is now made outside Manchester, although remarkably this fact is omitted in the new campaign.

Meanwhile, Holsten Pils has decided it's time for a rebrand, handing SiebertHead the usual hefty remuneration to make the usual imperceptible adjustments to Holsten's trademark yellow and green packaging. Long-time Holsten drinkers may be surprised that cosmetic adjustments are so important for a beer that assured us in its last campaign-but-one that "It's what's inside that counts."

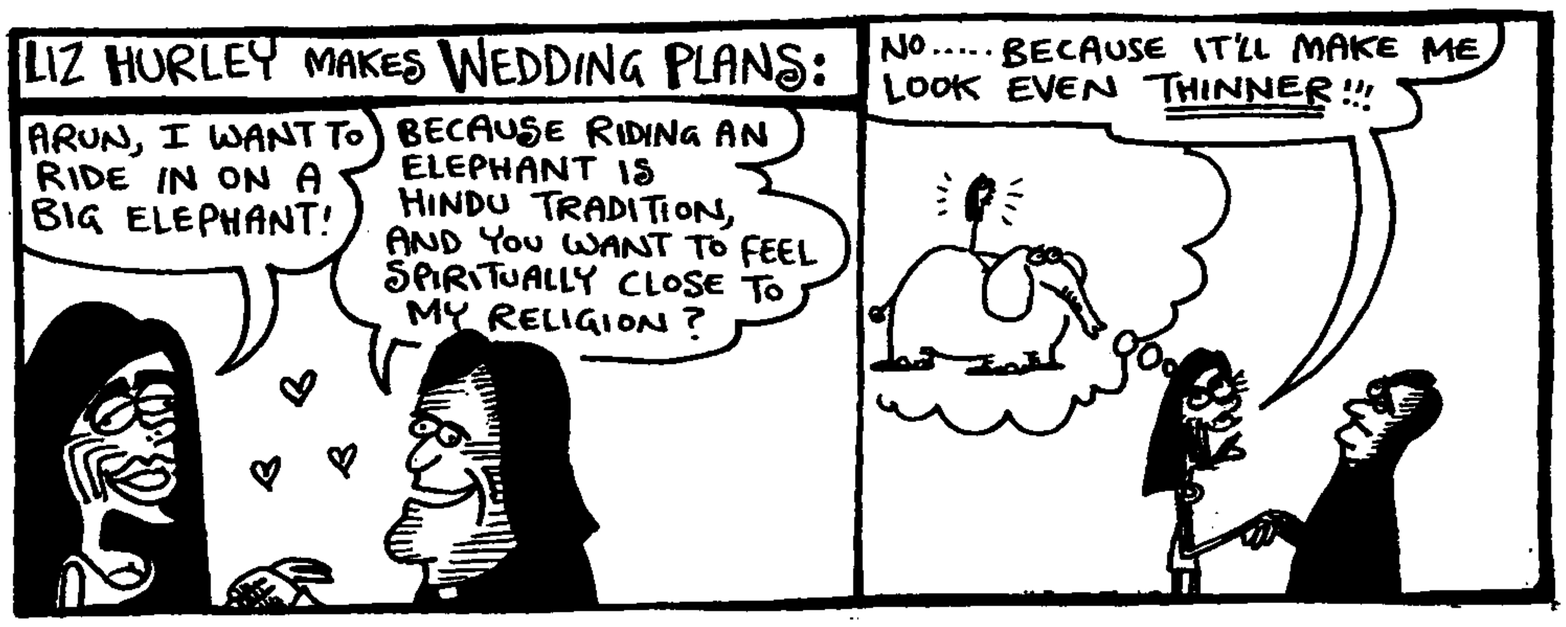
AFTER a raft of complaints, the BBC has been forced to relegate the fiasco that has been its Wimbledon campaign to a post-watershed timeslot.

The promos, by agency DFGW, feature a pair of female tennis players engaged in a titanic exchange, to the point where one of them quite literally cracks under the pressure and starts losing limbs. Predictably, such an effects-laden feast has had adland applauding; the reactions of the Henmaniacs, parents and housewives who make up most of the BBC's Wimbledon audience have been less effusive, however.

None of the complaints, however, mentioned the real problem with the ad: that it is a flagrant bite of a well-known music video by the director Chris Cunningham, who has worked in commercials himself and whose work would undoubtedly be known to the creatives at DFGW. Cunningham's 1998 video for Leftfield's "Africa Shox" featured a man who also incrementally disintegrated like so much shattered porcelain. If DFGW was going to pay Cunningham the compliment of borrowing his idea, it might also have noted that his film ended up being censored – just like theirs has been.

SUPERMODELS

KERBER


LIZ HURLEY MAKES WEDDING PLANS:
ARUN, I WANT TO RIDE IN ON A BIG ELEPHANT!
BECAUSE RIDING AN ELEPHANT IS HINDU TRADITION, AND YOU WANT TO FEEL SPIRITUALLY CLOSE TO MY RELIGION?
NO..... BECAUSE IT'LL MAKE ME LOOK EVEN THINNER!!!

DOING THE ROUNDS

Accelerating backwards

EVER the optimists, staff at the department of health have come up with a "failure strategy" to keep open the emergency departments of hospitals that go into financial meltdown as a result of "new" Labour's asset-stripping policy, which allows private companies to compete unfairly with the NHS.

Health secretary Patricia "I saved Rover and I'll save the NHS" Hewitt says she "would not want patients to use services they don't want". In reality patients will be funnelled towards Independent Treatment Centres (ITCs) in preference to the NHS, as they have been given guaranteed five-year contracts.

Patients may like the idea of having their operations in spanking new, MRSA-free buildings; but as ever with Labour, the fix is short term. None of the ITC companies currently has any obligation to train UK surgeons, but the crisis this is precipitating is forcing the government to consider paying them to do so. As ITCs already get 20-25 percent more per case than the NHS, and cherry pick the simple procedures, an additional training tariff will send costs spiralling. Proof, if nothing else, of how much the NHS used to do for so little.

THE race is on to find which hospital is in the direst financial straits, with South Tees hospital trust projecting an impressive £32m debt by 2007. Managers are currently trying to claw back savings on hospitality and, um, stamps. Meanwhile the deputy chief executive and finance director of Shrewsbury and Telford hospital have been sent on gardening leave after "concerns about the trust's financial position" (ie £10m in debt). And the chief executive and chair of Queen Elizabeth hospital King's Lynn trust have resigned over an £8.5m deficit.

Elsewhere, Bedfordshire hospital trust is also £8.5m down; Surrey and Sussex strategic health authority could be anything from £29m to £341m in the red by the end of the year with the Royal West Sussex trust alone projecting a £142m loss by 2007-08. West Hertfordshire hospital is £13m light, Selby and York PCT is staring at a £28m debt while Kensington and Chelsea PCT is just £14.5m under.

So where on earth is the extra £50bn of NHS investment going? Not all in the right places, according to an NHS configuration poll of 80 chief executives. Only 9 percent strongly agreed that improvements matched expectations and 35 percent said gains were not proportional to investment. Even the health department is starting to doubt itself after a survey of 200 NHS staff at all levels found staff are "sick to death of change being rammed down our throats", relations between organisations are "almost bankrupt" and patients are being "processed like peas".

As the NHS Confederation policy director Nigel Edwards put it: "What people seem to see is an overwhelming number of things happening without any compelling story about why. That's a real problem." And Hewitt's response? "I am acutely conscious that a lot of staff feel very alienated from the changes… But I'm keeping my foot flat down on the reform accelerator."

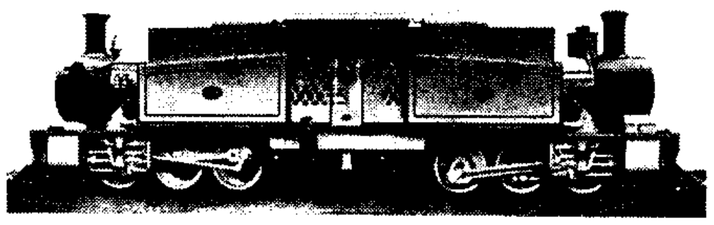
Close your eyes and it could be Blair.

M.D.

off your trolley

REEVE & WAY

HI, I'M YOUR PHYSIOTHERAPIST. IT'S IMPORTANT WE GET YOU MOVING AGAIN... BUILD UP THOSE WASTED MUSCLES
GOOD. WE'LL SOON HAVE YOU UP AND ON YOUR FEET...
AND BACK SITTING AROUND AT OUR OVERSUBSCRIBED CLINIC
5



SIGNAL FAILURES

Safety in numbers

"NEW" Labour's shake-up of rail safety is such a dog's dinner even Whitehall civil servants are confused.

The setting up of a rail accident investigation branch (RAIB) was recommended by an inquiry four years ago and enabled by legislation in 2003. Its launch was deferred to 13 June but it still hasn't happened.

When Labour legislated for RAIB it forgot Scotland has a different legal system from England and Wales, so RAIB would conflict with the primacy of Scotland's procurators fiscal. The Scottish executive won't sanction anything that lets English law override Scottish law, so even RAIB has no idea when it will start work. The oversight is especially embarrassing for Scottish secretary and Edinburgh South West MP Alistair Darling – the transport secretary when the bill went through.

Why is RAIB needed as well as a railways inspectorate *and* a rail safety and standards board (RSSB), set up in 2003 with a budget of more than £50m? The answer is privatisation.

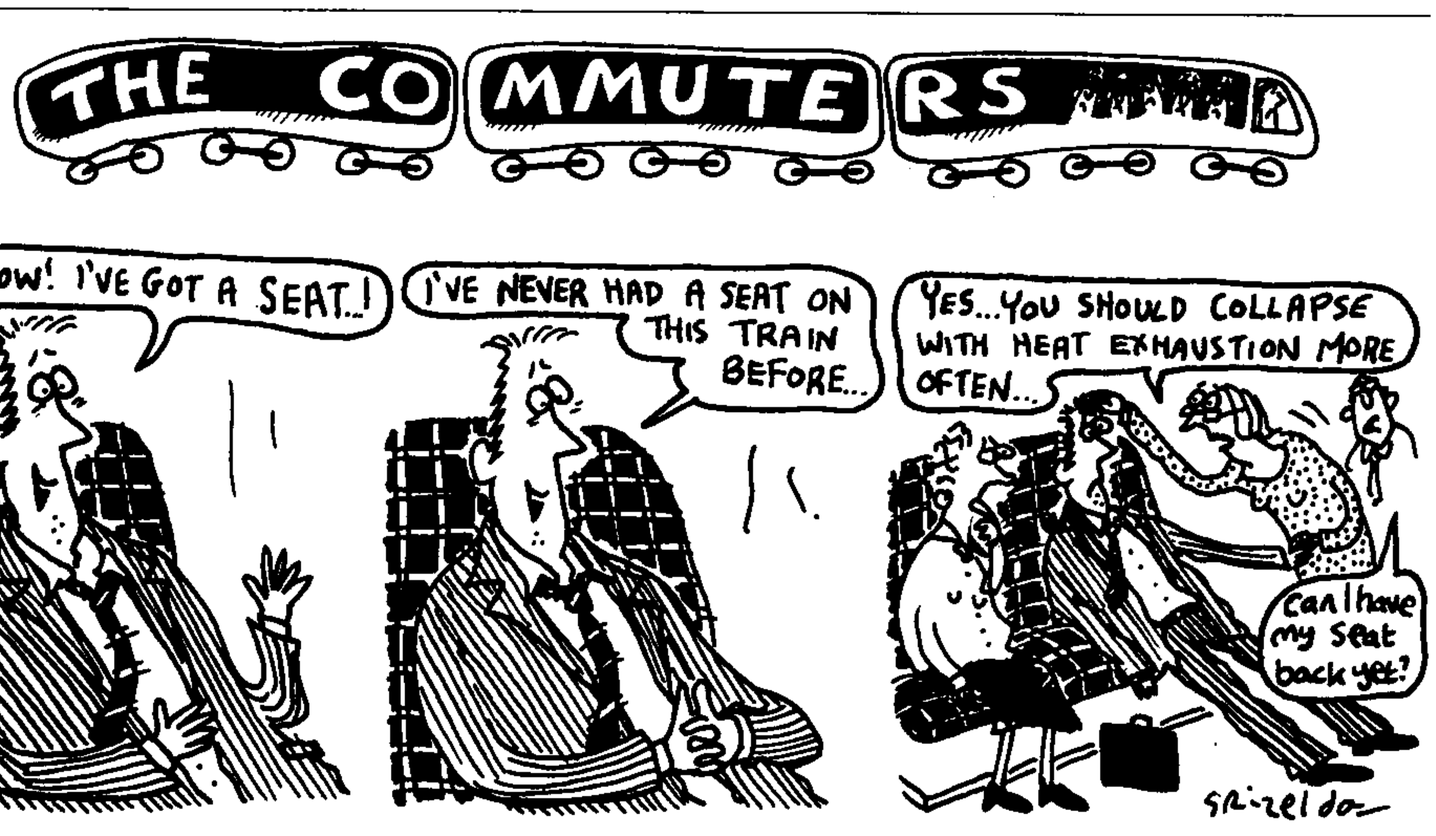
When British Rail managed the whole network, liability was clear. But once the network was handed to 100 companies, and hundreds of subcontractors, it became harder for investigators to uncover accident causes because each company's priority was to avoid incriminating itself. Sometimes that overrode the need to tell the whole truth, to reduce risks of future accidents. RAIB's job will be to find accident causes without apportioning blame. But others will read RAIB reports with a view to apportioning blame, so openness still isn't guaranteed.

Various rail fiefdoms have previously justified their staff numbers by creating and demanding more paperwork; RAIB could start a turf war with RSSB over boundaries of responsibility or duplicate some of RSSB's work. RAIB already employs 54 staff, including a chief inspector appointed more than two years ago. In 2005-06 it is budgeted to spend more than £5m, although it may investigate nothing. Continuing growth in bureaucracy is an inevitable by-product of a fragmented, privatised railway where the primary duty is to shareholders, not passengers or the state.

ONE of "new" Labour's ways to pay for growing bureaucracy and profits is downgrading parts of the network, using cunning tricks to minimise political fall-out.

Norton Bridge station, on the west-coast mainline in Staffordshire, is the first casualty. Its trains were badly disrupted by renewal of the mainline, and passengers drifted away. Last year the trains were withdrawn, ostensibly suspended, and the replacement buses successfully deterred remaining passengers. In March the "strategic" rail authority recommended closure of Norton Bridge and other stations affected by the service suspension. Last month the region's rail watchdog carried out a survey that found hundreds of people needed the stations, if only the trains would run again. That's the sort of unhelpful response which drove "new" Labour to scrap the regional watchdogs, as of this month.

Whether Norton Bridge station should close is impossible to tell. There's been no official consultation with the community and Labour has abolished the statutory closure inquiries introduced in the 1960s. That's academic anyway because Network Rail has demolished the footbridge to the platform, without securing regulatory permission for a material change to the rail network (see last *Eye*). Replacing it could cost about £1m – too much for such a small station which is therefore now closed.


THE COMMUTERS
OH WOW! I'VE GOT A SEAT..!
I'VE NEVER HAD A SEAT ON THIS TRAIN BEFORE...
YES...YOU SHOULD COLLAPSE WITH HEAT EXHAUSTION MORE OFTEN...
Can I have my seat back yet?
Grizelda

How public consultation works Pt 94:

PLANNED cuts on the new "greater western" franchise went out to "public consultation" the day *after* bidders were told to use the prescribed services as the definitive pattern.

The public has 60 days to respond and by the time answers are collated (more work for bureaucrats), the franchise bids will have been drawn up and probably submitted.

'Dr B Ching'

ROTTEN BOROUGHS

CHALK AND CHEESE

FRAYED tempers in Teignmouth, south Devon, over adventurer Simon Chalk's plan to build a trimaran in which he intends to sail solo around the world.

Nothing wrong with that – but Chalk wants to build his yacht and a 1,000 sq m visitor centre on a much-loved piece of recreational land known as The Den, and town councillors seem minded to let him, even though Teignmouth already has a boatyard.

On 21 March Chalk gave a presentation to councillors about the *Spirit of Teignmouth* project. The nine members present agreed it was worthy of further consideration. At the next full council meeting on 26 April, however, Teignmouth's mayor, Geoff Bladon, declared that under "Emergency Powers of the Mayor" – which don't exist – the application could be approved without further debate. When a vote was forced it was tied five for and five against, the casting vote falling to Mayor Bladon. No prizes for guessing how he voted.

A town council, of course, has no power to grant planning permission, but its recommendations are usually taken seriously by the planning authority (Teignbridge district council) because they are assumed to represent the wishes of locals. But that is definitely not the case here.

On 31 May, Cllr Chris Whitlock, who opposes the plan to build on The Den (which was set aside in 1869 for public use as a "garden or pleasure ground" in perpetuity) asked town clerk David Tickell to photocopy some papers. When Mr Tickell saw what he was being asked to copy – passages of standing orders demonstrating that the "decision" to approve building on The Den had not been legal, the clerk went, according to Whitlock, "into an uncontrollable rage... screaming and yelling that he refused to print the information and would not allow me to use council equipment as he did not agree with my point of view".

Cllr Bladon and Cllr Fred Tooley then appeared and what Tooley has called "a man to man talk" ensued, which left Cllr Whitlock, a kidney transplant patient, shaken and distressed. Tooley says: "If Cllr Whitlock can't stand that he shouldn't be on the council." Cllr Whitlock has now lodged a complaint with the Standards Board for England (SBE) about the "outrageous and dishonourable behaviour" he was subjected to. Next week's planning committee meeting should be lively.

Historical note: Simon Chalk will not be the first man to try to sail around the world solo in a trimaran from Teignmouth. In 1968 Donald Crowhurst set out to do just that and was never seen again. His boat, *Teignmouth Electron*, was eventually found floating upside down in the Atlantic. After Crowhurst's disappearance, the then chairman of Teignmouth council – Arthur Bladon, father of Geoff – remarked that everyone should look on the bright side (*Eye* 321) because, despite the "sad end" the whole thing had been "terrific publicity" for Teignmouth!

● **RUDOLPH GIULIANI, former mayor of New York, will deliver the "keynote" speech at the Local Government Association conference in Harrogate on 6 July. The LGA won't say how much it is paying for Mr Giuliani's thoughts on "leadership in local government", claiming the figure is "commercially confidential". Mr G's usual fee, however, is $100,000 (£54,736.02). Giuliani, who earned $8m from speaking engagements in 2002, even charged his usual 100 grand when he spoke at a tsunami fundraiser in South Carolina in February, although he did contribute $20,000 of it to the relief fund. No doubt the LGA delegates, more used to conference speakers of the calibre of, er, John Prescott, will find Rudy's pearls worth every penny of taxpayers' money.**

Nutritional therapist Tim Taylor talks about excluding food from your diet

Maidenhead Advertiser

LOWTON CLEAR

ONE OF the most enthusiastic supporters of Westminster council whistleblower Paul Dimoldenberg (*Eyes passim*) was Camden council's Blairite leader Dame Jane Roberts.

When Dimoldenberg was reported to the Standards Board for England (SBE) for leaking "confidential" (ie embarrassing) documents about the Shirley Porter affair to the BBC, Dame Jane passed the hat around to help with his legal costs. When he got off she personally called friends and colleagues to spread the good news.

The panel found that Westminster's Labour group leader had technically breached the local government code of conduct, but imposed no penalty because it decided he had acted in the public interest. As a result, the SBE is now asking councils for their views on including, on a permanent basis, the "public interest defence" for councillors.

Given Dame Jane's position, one would expect Camden to embrace the proposal warmly. But the council's initial response, drafted by borough solicitor Alison Lowton, concludes that the public interest defence "should not be supported". She adds, however, that "every attempt should be made to achieve open government by local authorities".

In the spirit of open government, Ms Lowton fails in her draft to disclose that she is herself a member of the SBE's adjudication panel. She also fails to disclose that she is also a complainant to the SBE: earlier this year she reported the chair of Camden's development control committee, Brian Woodrow, for "bringing the council into disrepute" over his publicly-stated reservations over a £2bn scheme to redevelop 67 acres of railway lands behind King's Cross station.

Lowton's dubious complaint – seen by Woodrow's supporters as an attempt to gag an elected representative on a matter of public importance – would stand even less chance if her target could use the public interest defence. But that is no doubt a coincidence.

HERD MENTALITY

WHEN is a herdsman's cottage *not* a herdsman's cottage? When it's a three-bedroomed, double-garaged, 2,800 sq ft pile and the humble "herdsman" who wants to build it has just flogged off his herd of 165 dairy cows.

This is what has happened in Pembrokeshire, where there have been protests at the successful application of farmer John Davies to build such a residence on his farm at Cwm Betws, near Eglwyswrw. The fact that the planning application was granted by Pembrokeshire county council, of which Mr Davies happens to be leader, may have had something to do with it.

Or perhaps it is because on 13 April a planning officer ruled that the size of the proposed building broke rules intended to prevent new developments in the countryside being disguised as "agricultural" dwellings – and then mysteriously changed his mind, omitting the objection from his report to the planning committee recommending approval.

In any event there will be more than enough room in the house and garage for the herdsman and several dairy cows too if Mr Davies ever decides to buy any more cattle.

● **LAST YEAR Labour Tameside council announced that Katherine House, a care home for severely disabled adults in Ashton-under-Lyne, was to close and be replaced by a new home with state-of-the-art facilities and 24-hour care. But the council has now ditched its promise of 24-hour care. If residents, some of whom cannot use the lavatory unaided, need help between the hours of 10pm and 7am, they will be obliged to telephone a call centre in Wiltshire. If they can manage to get to the phone, that is. A promised shop and hairdresser will not materialise and residents will only get one hot meal a day, other food being provided from a trolley. When the residents took their case to the council, most had to sit out in the cold because the "beacon" council's chamber can only accommodate one wheelchair.**

EDUCASHUN NEWZ

CHRIS WOODHEAD has succeeded in his stated aim of creaming off "more able children" from the state system into his for-profit Cognita independent schools by offering "new customers only" cut-price fees. But the deal seems to be helping his rivals as much as it is helping Cognita.

Woodward's promise of a 30 percent life reduction in fees (worth up to £25,000) has attracted 52 new pupils to his Akeley Wood school in Buckinghamshire. But existing full fee-paying parents – angry that they will be subsiding the new recruits – have responded by taking their children out. So far 19 parents have withdrawn their children from Akeley Wood, with more telling the *Eye* they are monitoring the effects of "this cheap marketing ploy".

This is all to the delight of neighbouring independent schools, one of which is now full and has had to close its books to new children.

Last month about 500 Akeley Wood parents confronted Woodhead, former chief inspector of schools, demanding equal treatment and pointing out that at the same time as Cognita was offering "new customer only deals" it was facing increases in fees of 7 percent. But Woodhead, who declined calls for his resignation amid allegations of poor management, was not persuaded.

In a statement to the *Eye* he said he wanted to reassure parents that "we are committed to teaching excellence and are not cutting corners in search of profit". The decision was taken to offer cheaper "assisted" places at Akeley Wood to tackle concerns about falling pupil numbers.

IT'S GRIM UP NORTH LONDON KNIFE & PACKER

I JUST LOVE THE BUZZ OF 24 HOUR LIVING! IT REALLY FREES UP ONE'S LIFESTYLE...
YOU CAN DO WHATEVER YOU WANT, WHENEVER YOU WANT... IT'S CRAZY, CRAZY, CRAZY!
SO WHAT ARE YOU UP TO?
I'M GETTING MY WORK SARONG LAUNDERED
AND I'M PICKING UP SOME HERBAL ASTHMA REMEDY AT 3AM! INSANE!
BAR
DANCE
DIAMOND DOGS
24 hr DELI

NOOKS and CORNERS

HERE is a sad, instructive story of what can happen to an historic building under the Blair regime. No 45 Deptford Terrace in Sunderland was a handsome stone Georgian house close to the River Wear. It was listed grade II in 1978 but last month what remained of it was cleared away.

Sunderland needs its surviving old buildings to give it a sense of identity and of its remarkable history. In the 18th century it played an important part in the industrial revolution; and the first iron bridge across the Wear was an engineering marvel. That has since been replaced; but several Georgian buildings survive. More recently the story has been the familiar one of economic decline and dereliction, urban clearance, disastrous cheap redevelopments and general depression. Hence the stock of listed buildings becomes all the more precious.

The late-Georgian house in Deptford Terrace became the home of Laing's shipyard manager in 1829; later it was a school, then a residence again before being taken over by a firm of builders in 1918, when the upper floors were rented out as accommodation. Then, in 1988, it was compulsorily purchased by Tyne & Wear development corporation, "presumably", as the *Sunderland Echo* observes, "as part of its strategy for the regeneration of the riverside."

In fact the house stood empty and fell into dereliction. In 1998, when the wretched quango was being wound up, it was sold to a businessman, Mr Alex Smiles. Others wanted to restore the house as a residence but Mr Smiles was the highest bidder.

Mr Smiles operates a waste disposal business on the adjacent site. He was granted planning permission for this by Sunderland council on condition that he restore 45 Devonshire Terrace. Oddly enough, restoration did not proceed and the building continued to decay, becoming so dangerous that the council's surveyor permitted its demolition. "It was a liability," a no doubt smiling Mr Smiles told the *Sunderland Echo*. "It was unsafe and had to come down. We had a ceremonial demolition, with champagne."

So what of the future of the cleared site? Mr Smiles once toyed with building a replica of the original house there, but not any more. "I have just returned from business in Germany and Sweden and I liked the summer houses with verandahs I saw there. They reminded me of California. What's wrong with having a little bit of California in Sunderland?"

So what should have happened to protect this listed building? English Heritage – crippled and demoralised by cuts in funding and the disdain of ministers – has to be told of such cases but the statutory responsibility for grade II buildings falls on the local authority which, if repairs notices are ignored, has the power of compulsory purchase. But such powers are seldom used because of the risk of large and unrecoverable costs. At least Sunderland – unlike many councils – has a conservation officer; but with a limited budget and 600 listed buildings, he can do little. So Sunderland needs outside help to look after its historic buildings; but with English Heritage emasculated and lottery funds diverted from "culture" to projects the government should be paying for anyway, this is not available. The fate of 45 Deptford Terrace is a direct reflection of Labour's concern for our architectural heritage.

ANOTHER heritage organisation making economies is the National Trust – despite its huge and growing membership, "hungry for heritage": currently 3.4 million.

Last month Fiona Reynolds, the dynamic director-general, sent a memo about the "Implementation of £20 million plan" to council and committee members. This has so far involved cutting 170 jobs to save £6m a year. "This is and continues to be a painful time," Ms Reynolds admits. "But our aim has been to achieve the large bulk of savings in one go, so that we can reduce uncertainty as far as we can, and support staff by establishing a more stable environment."

After endless restructurings, threats of redundancies and moving the headquarters to Swindon, the loyal and dedicated staff might welcome some stability. Indeed, the director-general admits: "The National Trust has been through some big changes, and in managing this we've got some things right, and some things wrong. Not all of our new structures have stood the test of time... We have also tried to make too many changes too quickly from the centre, and have tended to want to do everything, everywhere." Quite.

But, while explaining the redundancies, no mention is made of the financial cost of moving the headquarters from London to Swindon – not to an historic building needing a new use but to a flashy new £20m office block. Such is to be the exciting new image of the once fuddy-duddy old National Trust.

Martin Drury, the last director-general, was paid £70,000 a year. Such a miserable figure would be insulting for a forward-looking Blairite chief-executive, so Fiona Reynolds demanded more and is now on a salary of more than £200,000 a year (including relocation benefits, because of Swindon). Given the painful belt-tightening, perhaps it is time an example was set at the very top?

'Piloti'

YOUNG BRITISH ARTISTS

BY BIRCH

I-SPY *Baker Street*

Submitted by Andy Perrott. £10 paid for similar submissions. *(SAE required for return of photographs)*

MUSIC & MUSICIANS

THE London Symphony Orchestra is rarely out of the news these days, so it was no great surprise to find that last week's birthday honours included a knighthood for departing boss Clive Gillinson to take with him to his new job at Carnegie Hall. Congratulations to Sir Gillinson, as the Americans will doubtless persist in calling him, have been flooding in from both sides of the Atlantic. And they're deserved. Sir G has worked hard. He's turned a one-time squabbling, scraping-around orchestra into the best in Britain. And he'll be missed.

But as this column has reported before, he leaves behind him some potential time-bombs ticking in the dust. One is the financial state of LSO St Lukes, the orchestra's converted-church headquarters, which Gillinson insists is settled although it doesn't look that way to everyone. The other is the genuine surprise announcement that the LSO's conductor Colin Davis will step down in Gillinson's wake – to be replaced by Valery Gergiev.

At face value, Gergiev is a catch: an international superstar of the kind an orchestra like the LSO needs if it's going to persuade the world it truly belongs up there with the Berlin and Vienna Philharmonics. He was also, we are told, the "unanimous" choice of the players.

But he was not the first choice. The LSO had previously asked Simon Rattle (who said no) and hot-ticket-of the-moment Mariss Jansons (ditto). And with those two off the list, there weren't so many options. Gergiev turns in sometimes staggeringly good performances and sometimes staggeringly bad: his genius is unreliable. The archetypal Russian cowboy, he keeps crazy schedules, over-books himself, turns up for concerts minutes before going on, and has a habit of sending deputies to do his rehearsals.

As one professional-insider says: "He's a great artist but a nightmare to deal with. You never know which part of the world he's in, you can never track him down. He says he'll be in one hotel, then turns out to be somewhere different. And God knows what he gets up to, but he seems to leave a deliberate smoke-screen to hide his whereabouts. He even checks into hotels under false names. All of which makes it bloody difficult when you're supposed to have a meeting with him and he's not there."

That the LSO is worried about its un-tameable new maestro is clear from small but significant details in the contract with him. It states firmly, for example, that he will be escorted to rehearsals in an LSO car that will meet his at a specified hotel (it ought to add, with armed guard).

How Gillinson's successor, the purposeful but new-to-the-job Kathryn McDowell, will cope is an interesting question. "The best welcome-present I can think of sending her is a year's supply of valium," said a leading London agent last week.

'Lunchtime O'Boulez'

Letters

Censor sensibility?

Sir,

Just thought you might like to know that for some reason (I can't guess why) the branch of WH Smith in Waterloo's Eurostar terminal mysteriously placed all its copies of the latest edition of your esteemed organ (1134) back to front (back page facing the magazine browser). Perhaps it felt it necessary to spare the feelings of travellers to Brussels and Paris alike. I think perhaps you're owed an explanation...

CHRIS FLETCHER,

Lille.

Al Jazeera jeers

Sir,

I nearly choked on my falafel when I read that al Jazeera refused to show pictures of a Y-fronted Saddam for "professional and moral reasons" yet has no qualms about showing images, provided by scum-of-the-earth insurgents, of soon-to-be-decapitated hostages.

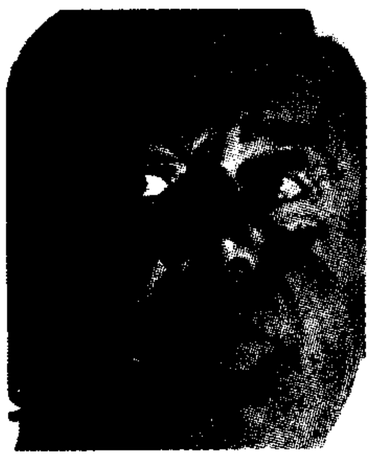
To paraphrase Ali G, "It is 'cos Saddam is black?"

Sincerely,
DEV BHOJWANI,

Via email.

Lookalike

Clarke



Demonic head

Sir,

When the Times earlier this year pictured a 'demonic head' unearthed in China, I was struck by its resemblance to our dear ex-Chancellor and current Member for Rushcliffe, the Rt Hon Kenneth Clarke QC, MP.

I wonder if, by any chance, the two are related?

Yours faithfully,
JOHN POPE,

Nottingham.

Hit and miss

Sir,

I was not inconsiderably surprised that my friend and jazz fan Kenny Clarke got the name of bluesman "Fats" Soames's greatest hit completely wrong. It was of course "I'm Gonna Sit Right Down And Have Myself Some Dinner". He was accompanied on this classic by "The Three Bottles Of Claret".

Furthermore, your somewhat short list of French celebs who campaigned for the "Oui" contained another error. Edith Piaf's greatest hit started with a definite "NON".

If your esteemed organ produces any more howlers like this, and, moreover, if Sylvie Krin does not return soon, I shall have to turn to Le Canard Enchainé.

A plus,
DAVID HAYDOCK,

Douai, France.

Not so gr8 G8

Sir,

Regarding your comments on the reluctance of the G8 countries to ratify the United Nations convention on corruption (1134, p3).

Might I suggest that this would in no way be in the interest of the "Rich Nations", as the problems of corruption in just one of each may outweigh the total in the whole of ALL of the developing countries.

And in any case, the G8 countries have contributed directly to the corruption problems of those countries and would not want any attention drawn to their actions.

Regards,
C.R. PENROSE,

Leeds.

Recycling rubbish

Sir,

Mr Seear's (1134) talking utter rubbish when he blames Lambeth residents for Cleanaway clearing away bags of recyclable material in Lambeth and putting it in with landfill material.

This has happened to us on several occasions and is most certainly not a result of staff "identifying contaminated recycling". On the most recent occasion I had carefully separated five full bags full of recyclable cardboard from a pile of builders' waste in our front yard. Even though I had not left them on the pavement for collection these were taken away by Cleanaway along with our bins the day before I was going to leave them with the recycling waste for collection.

And anyway, is Mr Seear seriously suggesting that one used yoghurt pot would render a whole bag of glass and cans (which may also contain food remnants) unfit for recycling? Surely the impressive facilities for separating "dry co-mingled recyclables" that it boasts of on its website can cater for this. Or perhaps it's cheaper to throw it in the landfill and blame us instead.

MARK LOVE,

Via email.

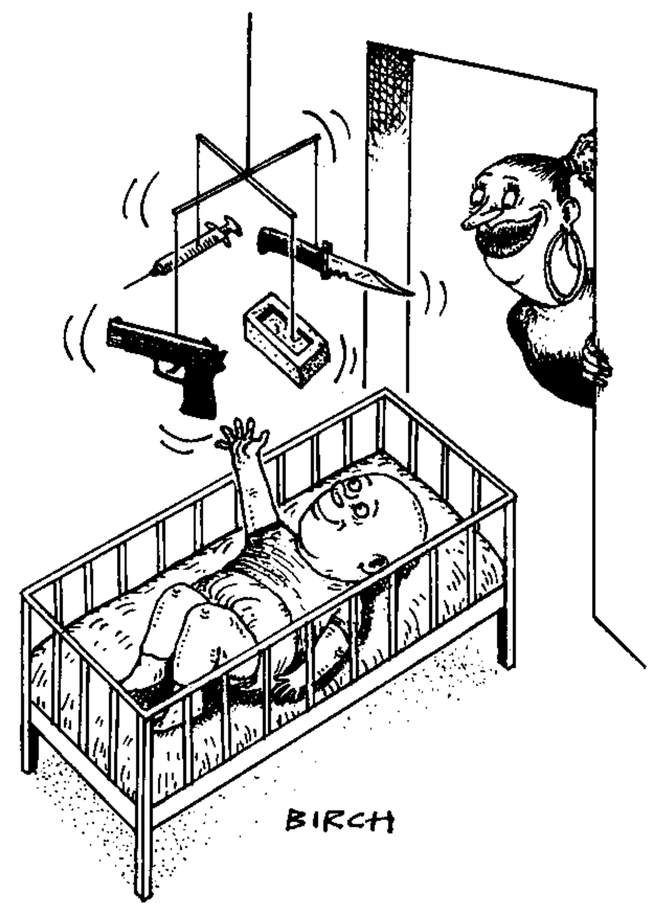
Northern exposure

Sir,

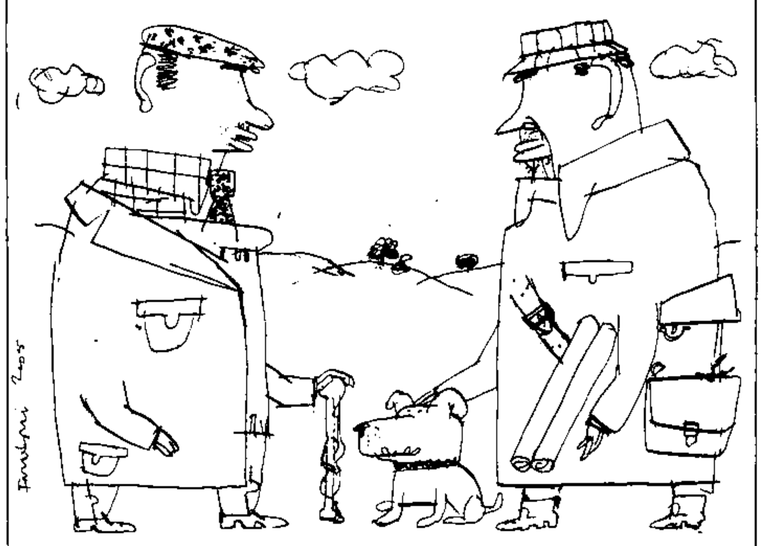
It's a bit harsh to blame the Grauniad for "Barnsley is the new Tuscany". The paper's reporter was simply quoting a light-hearted quip from Yorkshire poet Ian McMillan, who was himself taking the mickey out of the Lonely Planet and its newly-discovered enthusiasm for certain northern towns and cities (which I don't think included Barnsley).

Regards,
CHRISTOPHER CONNOLLY,

Via email.



Scenes You Seldom See



"Okay, so we get a few dead lambs and chickens, but a fox has to survive just like the rest of us"

Alice band

Sir,

Re Cheshire Cat's grin correspondence. Joel Birenbaum of Chicago, an academic and "Carrollian", discovered a carving of a grinning cat at a church in Croft, Co. Durham, which Lewis Carroll knew in his childhood. Joel said that if you go down on your knees you can see only the grin, not the cat. Presumably, as a small child, Lewis Carroll also saw that effect and used the experience years later in Alice In Wonderland, for Alice's encounter with the Cheshire Cat.

I wonder whether anyone has a photo of the Croft church's cat?

Yours faithfully,
JANICE JAMES,

London W9.

Hitting the roof

Sir,

Re St Columba's Church. We were intrigued by Malcolm Cooper's brief response on behalf of Historic Scotland to Piloti's excellent piece on the St Columba's Church roof fiasco (1133).

While it is technically accurate to say that Historic Scotland had agreed to a roof over the ruin by the time Piloti's piece appeared, it is rather disingenuous of Malcolm to imply that this was the established position of his organisation. The fact is that Historic Scotland, from 2000 to April 2005, steadfastly refused to approve a roof over the building on the basis of "lack of information" – difficult to believe when our small community trust has spent in excess of £20K on engineering analyses and an archaeological survey of remaining evidence for a roof at wallhead.

At a site meeting of 19 April 2005, a representative of Historic Scotland baldly stated to trust members that "we do not accept a roof". Piloti compiled his article on Monday 16 May and, on Wednesday 18 May, the trust received a letter (dated 16 May 2005) from Historic Scotland confirming that it was willing to consider, in principle, a scheduled monument consent application for reroofing the church. This was in response to some intensive lobbying by the trust, including a broadside to the senior inspector of ancient monuments, copied to the Scottish minister of tourism, culture and sport. That letter was received by the trust **after** *Piloti's piece had gone to print. As Piloti said, a clear case of antiquarian prejudice.*

We welcome Historic Scotland's commitment in print to agree the new roof and we look forward to working with them to deliver a project which makes sense.

Yours faithfully,
DONALD JOHN MACSWEEN,

Chair, Urras Eaglais na h-Aoidhe.

Losing its fizz

Sir,

Re Neophiliacs (1134): "The single currency is Europe's New Coke". Sorry, chaps, New Coke is a brand name, which you even capitalised correctly. In 1985 Coca-Cola introduced a new drink to rival the increasingly popular Pepsi. New Coke was a disastrously expensive mistake that was eventually recalled when rejected by the public but only after a great many jobs had been lost. This makes it a rather good metaphor for the euro and thus undeserving of mockery in your otherwise resplendent publication.

Regards,
ROBIN JUBBER,

London SE27.

Star bores

Sir,

Robert White might have wanted to see his name in Private Eye for something more intellectual, but he should at least try to get his facts right. It was Sipho Dias who negotiated the contract with the Kaminos to build the clone troopers, not County Dooku.

RICHARD ANDERSON,

Via email.

● Sorry, Richard Anderson, but it looks like you've fallen for the same Sith trickery as the Kaminoans themselves. Just because Jedi Master Sifo-Dyas's name was on the contract doesn't mean he was actually the one who ordered a clone army.

Given that Sifo-Dyas was killed at around the same time as the army was purchased, and that Jango Fett – the model for the clones – tells Obi-Wan he was recruited by a man called Tyrannus (Count Dooku's Sith name), it is very broadly implied in the film that Darth Sidious and his apprentice were the ones fraudulently ordering an army… *(That really is enough. Ed.)*

Photo opportunity

Sir,

Dumb Britain (1134) appears to suggest that the contestant who answers that the religion of Japan is Brillo rather than Shinto is incorrect. I am also certain, however, that at some time I have seen a photograph in which a young woman of Asian appearance seems to be worshipping Brillo. Do you perchance have such a photograph in your files?

Yours faithfully,
GERAINT THOMAS,

Via email.

"Perhaps the scented candle was a bad idea"

Hunt for the truth

Sir,

I enjoyed your piece on "The Integral Role of Deep Throat in American Politics". Unfortunately, it was inaccurate – though only on both counts.

Nixon was not impeached; he resigned the office before a House vote on impeachment was taken. Clinton WAS impeached by the House, but not convicted by the Senate.

Yours tediously,
MIKE HUNT,

Datchet, Berks.

To groin a phrase

Sir,

Andy Townsend's comment about the player with cramp in both groins is neither silly nor mistaken. In informal language "groin" has been adopted as a euphemism for crotch/genital area. In formal language it is the area where the thigh joins the torso. You have two thighs – you have two groins. Any medical dictionary will confirm.

JOHN MACKIE,

Via email.

Colemanballs

£10 paid for contributions

"There's always pressure – we just need to stick to our toes."
KEVIN PIETERSEN, BBC
(James Hopkins)

"We will not be putting aircraft in the air that cannot fly."
MoD spokesman
(Tim Burke)

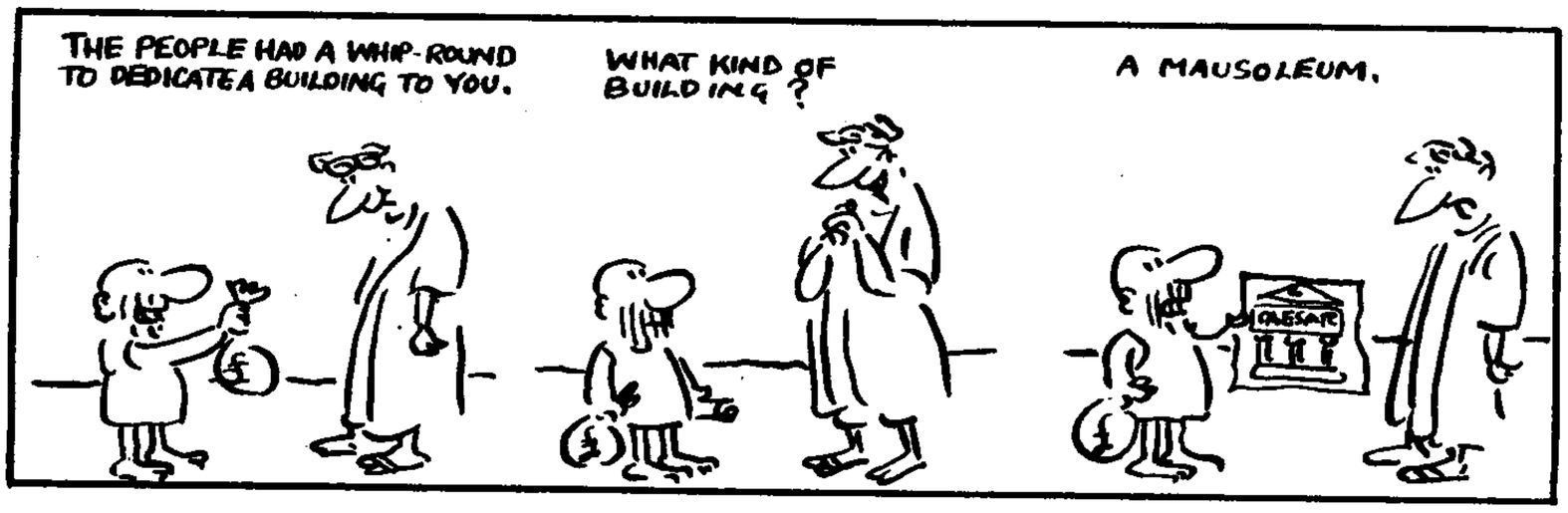
"Their problems have opened the door for a new face to step into their shoes."
'The Insider', Soccernet
(Jack Groves)

"I do not want to bang my own trumpet..."
SIR MALCOLM RIFKIND, News 24
(Shib Roy)

"He [Puerta] hit that shot with both feet off the air."
JOHN LLOYD, French Open Tennis
(Kim Singer)

HOM SAP

AUSTIN



SOLUTIONS

"OCS: One Complete Solution for property support services" – *cooks and cleaners*

"Greentech has the experience, expertise and systems to provide solutions to the world's turf needs" – *grass*

"Flexible professional development solutions" – *training manuals*

"Barconwood visual information solutions" – *notice boards*

"Collins Solutions Dictionary" – dictionary

All submitted by readers

N.B. M.D.

Sir,

"Doing the rounds" (27th May) was incorrect in claiming that doctors working in independent treatment centres are unregulated. Any doctor that wishes to practise in the UK is legally required to register with the GMC, regardless of the length of time they are in the country. In doing so, they must satisfy us that their knowledge and skills meet the required standard. If a doctor is not registered with us but is practising as a doctor, they are potentially committing a criminal offence.

Yours faithfully,
AMANDA WATSON,

Director of Registration,
General Medical Council.

And another thing…

Sir,

I know it's a while since I read the book, but it was the Paralysed Man who got told to "pick up your bed" (Mark 2:9) whereas Lazarus was told to "come out" (John 11:43). Maybe you should get out more… and come to mass.

Yours in Christ,
FR SIMON RUNDELL SCP,

Parish of S. Thomas the apostle, Elson, Gosport.

Sir,

"The Directors" cartoon strip in issue 1134 bears a striking resemblance to "The Directors" cartoon strip only three or four issues ago – are they by any chance twins?

Yours,
TONY RICKARD,

University of Manchester.

Sir,

I am sure that I am not the only reader to spot the oxymoronic element in "It's Grim Up North London" (1133).

*Karaoke invites the audience to sing along with popular songs with only the backing track supplied. Gregorian chant is an UNACCOMPANIED choral form; there, er… **isn't** any backing to supply. None can exist.*

Yours,
HOWARD HOPE,

Thames Ditton.

Sir,

Re Ad Nauseam (1134): "Congratulations to KFC, whose call-centre staff eating with their mouths full… has become the most complained about ad ever".

And congratulations to you for bringing this grave matter to public attention before KFC start talking with their mouths open.

Yours tearfully,
NIGEL IRWIN-LONGHURST,

Speke, Liverpool.

Letter from **Africa**

from Our Own Correspondent

WE AFRICANS are in a mess. We know because we live with the consequences every day and because we have you to tell us.

Mr Blair's Africa Commission report this year drew even more attention to our plight. But the debate it generated, and the G8's plans to help, are less than honest and do not do us justice. The commission says there is a new generation of democratic governments on the continent. Really?

Not in Ethiopia, where prime minister Meles Zenawi bans all foreign ownership of land. He refuses to implement what was supposed to be an internationally binding arbitration agreement over the border dispute that led to a futile and bloody *war with Eritrea*. And if he's not arresting opposition supporters in their thousands, he's having the police shoot unarmed demonstrators, killing more than 30. Oh, and he's a key member of the commission.

Then there's Uganda, one of Gordon Brown's debt write-off candidates. For 20 years it has been diddling the donors, who are so desperate for an African success story they shrugged off the country's war with Rwanda, its plundering of next door Congo and its wilfully incompetent handling of an insurrection in its own northern province. Yet President Yoweri Musveni, in power since 1986, is trying to persuade Ugandans to allow him another term!

And what is to be done with Nigeria, home to one in five Africans, where President Obasanjo is claiming that it too should have its $35bn debt written off? Brown and chums say no, or not yet. But who sanctioned all those crazy loans to support what even the most basic due diligence would have revealed as obviously fictitious projects, testimony to the creative powers of a slew of corrupt officials and their business cronies? And so Nigerians pay not only for their own sins but also for the incompetence of western export credit agencies that let the money be frittered away. Shouldn't accountability work both ways?

George Bush lectures us about corruption, and he should know. His deputy's former company Halliburton is under investigation on three continents over allegations that it fuelled a slush fund of more than $100m to win a huge contract to build Africa's biggest liquefied natural gas plant.

But let us finish with a salutary story. When President Mwai Kibaki replaced Daniel Arap Moi as Kenya's president in 2002, donors rejoiced. Kibaki promised to end corruption and appointed veteran activist John Githongo to lead the campaign. Early this year Githongo came to Europe on an official visit. He did not return to Kenya and has stayed on in London. He has yet to explain his decision; but Kenyans believe that he had discovered that the cabinet is involved in corruption up to the hilt.

Have you caring Brits encouraged Githongo to disclose all he knows and offered him help or legal advice to prepare a dossier? Apart from a convivial lunch, you haven't done a thing. Good governance is a fine concept – but not worth causing a fuss about for a country where Britain has a nice military training agreement, where 30,000 UK passport holders live in relative peace, and which is home to £5bn of British investment.

All this prompts a question: in your heart of hearts, dear donors, do you really want to take us on? We do need help. But the answers to our problems are not as clear as many of our sympathisers make out. To double aid and write-off debt is to address the symptoms, not the cause, of our malaise. "To do nothing is intolerable," says Sir Bob Geldof. "To do something is not enough. To do everything we can is our clear duty."

We have a question for the great man. What if doing everything you can happens to include doing the wrong thing? Now that would really be disastrous. Or to use language he understands, Africa would be well and truly *focked*.

FUNNY OLD WORLD

COMPILED BY **VICTOR LEWIS-SMITH**

● "Basically, it was a regular kind of Keith Cole show," gay performance artist Keith Cole told reporters in Toronto, "and people who know my stuff know that I'm in character when I'm up there. The racial and homophobic slurs are all tongue-in-cheek, whether I'm calling myself a 'big fat faggot with gingivitis', or describing a last-minute performance by an Asian drag act as 'a surprise attack, just like Pearl Harbor'. I agree that my act is sexist, racist, homophobic, classist, size-ist and age-ist, but we live in a racist and homophobic society, so that's my way of saying 'deal with it', instead of pretending it doesn't exist. But I admit that urinating onstage over the heads of the audience was uncalled for, and for that I apologise. It was a one-time-only event, and it won't happen again."

Cole's partial apology was issued after the AIDS fundraising concert he was hosting (held in Toronto's Buddies In Bad Times Theatre, in the presence of government ministers) ended with a mass audience walk-out. Organiser Scott Cheslock described Cole's behaviour as "disgusting, especially when he started berating a member of the audience for 'being all Niggerish'. It's heartbreaking that an event I've worked on for six months will now be remembered for the disgraceful urination of one man, and not for the $8,642 raised. I know Cole is edgy and pushes the envelope, but he was representing our organisation up there, and his behaviour really pisses me off." *(The Toronto Globe & Mail, 16/12/04. Spotter: Wallace Brown)*

– ● –

● *"The idea behind the scheme is to test the competency of rookie Customs agents at Pierre Trudeau airport," Heather Markgraf of the Hudson Productions Theatre Company told reporters in Rigaud, Quebec, "but it's great experience for the mock travellers too. Because they have to pretend to be drug smugglers and terrorists, and look shifty for up to eight hours at a time, they really got into character and their acting skills improve a lot. We've had a lot of actors who've gone on to do amazing things, who've got into TV and movies, and they all started here at Rigaud.*

"Federal Customs first approached our theatre company about four years ago, and we now supply them with about 18 actors a day. When they arrive at the airport in the morning, each actor is handed a one-page description of their character – drug-runner, bomber, or maybe an innocent person who just looks suspicious – and the Customs trainees have to deal with them appropriately. For example, my last role was as the archetypal passenger with something to hide. I looked nervous, booked my ticket at the last minute, kept looking at the exit doors, paid in cash, didn't have a steady job, and seemed thoroughly shifty. But when the Customs trainee questioned me, he eventually discovered that my fictional character wasn't doing anything illegal at all. I was just nervous because I was going to meet my Internet boyfriend who I'd never seen before.

"To be real and in the moment for an entire day, to consistently yell at somebody, to consistently cry, to consistently do what's needed... we find it very taxing and tiring, but artistically rewarding too." (National Post, 5/2/05. Spotter: Brendan Joseph O'Byrne)

– ● –

● "Our Dutch Wives aren't just inflatable sex dolls," said Hajime Kimura in his Forest Of Dolls shop in Tokyo, "they're elegant latex mannequins that a man can have a real relationship with. For 45,000 yen, you can have any of our beautiful life-size models delivered to your hotel room, then picked up again next day. They arrive dressed in your choice of wig and costume and have realistic skin texture, although they are rather cold to the touch, so we suggest warming them

up in the bath first, before you start playing with them. Most men rent a Dutch Wife because they don't want to risk catching a disease in a brothel. Mostly, they want company while they're watching adult movies, but some like to photograph themselves acting out their fantasies. We're currently renting out 150 dolls a month from this shop alone, with a monthly turnover of 3 million yen, and that's about average for our forty shops nationwide."

Sex therapist Kim Myung Gun added that, "Most of the people who hire these Dutch Wives aren't otaku (geeks), they're ordinary salarymen in their thirties and forties. It seems that more and more men are losing their desire for real women. So rather than have sex with a woman who doesn't fulfil their expectations, they prefer to play with something that corresponds to their fantasy, even if she's not real." *(Nikkan Gendai, 16/4/05. Spotter: Robert Harland)*

ST ALBION PARISH NEWS

Incumbent: Rev A.R.P. Blair MA (Oxon)

Hullo!

And, as you can imagine, my message to all my parishioners this week is 'stand firm'!

In the words of perhaps the greatest incumbent St Albion's ever had before 1997, "the vicar's not for turning!".

I am referring, of course, to my problems with our French friend Monsignor Chirac, who this time has gone several steps too far!

At our recent Oecumenical Union Council in Belgium, this so-called man of the cloth had the audacity to demand that I paid for everyone's lunch out of St Albion's Parish funds!

Talk about outrageous! To begin with, I didn't have a starter and I only drank tap water throughout the meal.

Whereas Pastor Schroeder ordered a huge pile of bratwurst and sauerkraut, and Monsignor Chirac himself insisted on tucking into platesful of pâté de foie gras, snails and frogs' legs, washed down with bottle after bottle of expensive French wine!

Hey, don't get me wrong! People can eat and drink what they like! And these are my friends and colleagues!

So I have no objection to us all having a jolly good meal together every so often – and if they want to overdo it a bit, that's their problem!

But, look, they can't then sit around when the bill arrives and expect all the hard-working parishioners of St Albion's to dig deep into their pockets and pay for their food mountains and wine lakes!

So I said to them, in my best French, "Non!". I told them in no uncertain manner that there was absolutely no question whatsoever of me agreeing to pay a penny (or euro-cent!) more than was fair!

I don't want to be petty, but Monsignor Chirac's share of the bill alone was 938 euros, ie fourteen times more than mine!

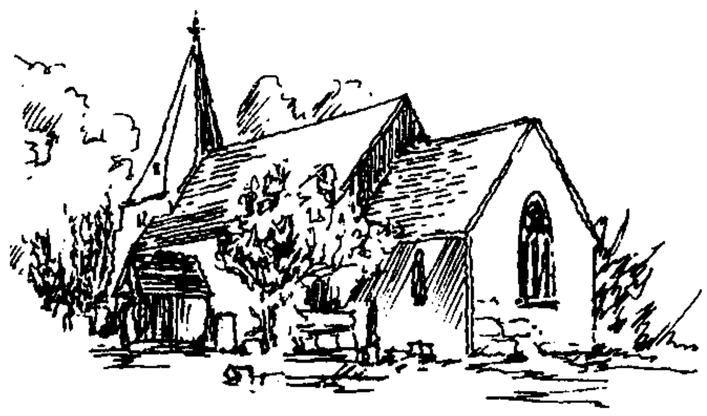
Is that fair, I ask? "Non!" again is the answer!

So, you can see, I really did take a firm line on this and I wasn't going to give a single inch (or millimetre, as we now call it).

Don't get me wrong. When I say firm, I don't mean I'm not prepared to negotiate.

That would be silly, to say that one's not prepared to talk about something at all, and not come to a sensible agreement.

In the words of our good friend, Mr Mandelson, who has been running our outreach programme in Brussels for the last few months, "Just because you say 'non', that doesn't stop you meaning 'oui'!".



So, in the end, after many hours of discussion, which I don't mind admitting got at times pretty heated, I did agree to pay the bill! But I asked the others to pay me back which they promised to consider very seriously and would let me know their decision in the next few years.

I think you'll agree that this was, in the circumstances, a sensible compromise and, in many ways, a victory for my policy of being absolutely firm!

Yours, Tony

A LETTER FROM THE OFFICE OF MS CHERIE BOOTH Q.C.

Dear Sir,

I must remind your readers that when I am invited to give a lecture in Malaysia on the important topic of "What It Is Like To Be Married To The Vicar", I am only doing so in my private capacity as a professional lawyer and as a world-acknowledged expert on human rights. And one of my human rights, I would remind parishioners, is to make as much money as possible out of being married to the Vicar. So, if I choose to open the Sleeping Tiger Shopping Mall in Kuala Lumpur, at the invitation of that highly-respected local businessman Mr Del Boi, that is entirely a matter between me and my accountants. Anyone who suggests otherwise will lay themselves open to a writ of scandalum magnatum and risks a sum in damages of not less than the 700 million Malaysian Kokh (£30,000) which I am to receive for my talk.

Yours faithfully,
C. Booth, Q.C.

The vicar's wife campaigns for "Fee Speech"! As seen by local artist Mr de la Nougerede

A Notice From Mrs Kelly, the new Chair of the Governors, St Albion's Primary School (shortly to be renamed the Kwikfit Beacon Academy)

Hullo, working mums and working dads!

I've got great news. As from this autumn, you never need worry again about rushing back from work to pick up your kids from school! Here's why – the school is going to be open 24 hours a day! There's going to be a Breakfast Club, A Lunch Club, An Afternoon Club, A Night Club and a Sleepover Club. So you can drop your kids off at school and pick them up months later, if you feel like it! We've all been worried about the effects of poor parenting on today's kids. And this is a brilliant solution. They need never see you again!

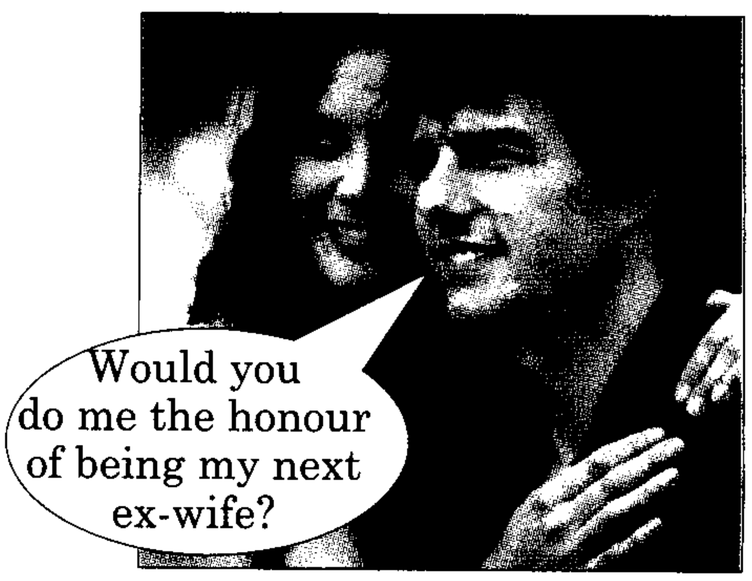
Mrs Kelly

Says the Vicar: *Hey, can I interrupt here?! This is a great idea, Ruth. And it's so great that I've written a special chorus for next week's evensong:*

"On Mother Kelly's doorstep
You can dump your kids all day,
For only 50 quid a week
They can work and sleep and play,
On Mother Kelly's doorstep
Down St Abion's way."

© Words and music T. Blair.

THE WEEK IN PICTURES



SIX TO WATCH

ONCE again the *Eye* puts you, the tennis fan, in the picture with our up-to-the-minute selection of the six top women tennis players in the modern game who will be competing for the coveted Wimbledon trophy.

Olga Legova, (Russia), 21, blonde, long-legged beauty from the land of the potato. ***Eye rating: Phwoarr!***

Maria Scorchova, (Ukraine),19, busty bombshell from the land of Lada. ***Eye rating: Phwoarr!***

Irina Lechova, (Belarus),18, gorgeous pouting temptress from the land of the collective Tractor Factory (now World of Diesel). ***Eye rating: Phwoarr!***

Korka Fomikova, (Russia), 17, blue-eyed nymphette from the land of Solzhenitsyn *(Surely 'beetroot and mosquitoes'? Ed.)* ***Eye rating: Phwoarr!***

Anna Gruntan-groanova, (Chechnya), 16, flaxen-haired, tanned cutie from the land of ethnic terrorism *(Is this right? Ed.)* ***Eye rating: Phwoarr!***

Timella Henwoman, (G.B.), 38, dark-haired English hopeful from the land of over-priced strawberries and warm champagne *(That's enough Six to Watch, Ed.)*

HOW DID THIS STORY GET INTO THE SUN — AGAIN?

by Our Special Correspondent **Andy Grenade**

DUE TO the appallingly lax security at News International, a fake story has yet again got into the Sun newspaper and has even appeared on the front page before anyone could stop it.

The story alleged that Prince Harry was at risk from a terrorist threat at the Royal Military Academy in Sandhurst.

But no check was made when it first tried to gain admission to the paper and the story was waved through – despite the fact that it was absolutely clear that it was a 'dud'.

Harry: Easy target for journalists *(surely 'terrorists'? Ed)*

Tit and Bomb

Said editor Rebekah Wade, "We are taking this very seriously. We will do everything in our power to make sure it happens again".

ON OTHER PAGES
Blurred pictures of someone who might be Harry but probably isn't 2-94

RADIO 3 **WHAT YOU MISSED**

Ken Clarke's All-Time Jazz Greats presented by the Rt Hon Kenneth Clarke MP PC

Kenny Clarke: Hi there again, hepcats! *(Lights up cigar and coughs violently for 10 minutes)* Welcome to part two of my all-time jazz greats. Today we're looking at some of the new names on the scene. And first The Moderniser Jazz Quartet, with Dave "Old Etonian" Cameron, George "Ozzie" Osborne, and, of course, "Wild" Mike Gove. Mmmm. Nice. So let's hear this cool track from their latest album, *The Notting Hill Experience.*

(Two minutes of boring music follows)

Clarke: Mmmm. Hopeless. Because, let's face it, the trouble with these youngsters today is that they can't compete with the giants of yesteryear. I'm thinking of Mad Mike Heseltine, Riffing "Mal" Rifkind and even the great Thatchmo herself.

So let's listen one more time to the Chingford Polecats' *On Yer Bike Blues* with Normo Tebbs on string 'em up bass.

(More dreary jazz music is played)

But there is still one name that everyone agrees is the King of Jazz, the grooviest groover, the heppest hep-cat of all – it's got to be Smokin' Ken Clarke!

So let's listen to my unforgettable recording of *Don't Step On My Old Brown Suede Hush Puppies* – and I don't have to tell you who is playing the trumpet. Smooth or what?

(We hear very old record with elderly man wheezing. Listeners switch off)

TV HIGHLIGHTS

Huw Hee: Tonight, Europe is in crisis as our reporter on the spot, Chris Crisis, reports.

(We see man standing outside large building in Brussels)

Crisis: Yes, Huw, Europe is in crisis tonight as ministers arrive for what could be the biggest upset in the history of the European Union.

Huw Hee: Can you tell us what's going on there?

Crisis: Well, there's a man getting out of a car... yes, it's the Deputy European Commissioner from the Netherlands. Excuse me, sir, is Europe in crisis tonight?

Man: No comment.

Crisis: That's the view then here tonight. Very much 'no comment', as Europe faces crisis. Oh, here's another man getting out of another car... it's a delegate from one of the new member states. I think he's from Romania. Sir, is Europe in crisis tonight?

Man: No comment.

Crisis: Well, that really confirms what I've been saying all along, that Europe is in a serious crisis tonight, with the future uncertain and the waters ahead very choppy indeed. Back to you in the studio, Huw.

Huw: Thank you for that, Chris. So, it's been officially confirmed tonight that Europe is in crisis and we'll be bringing you news through the night on the crisis as it develops or, if you've got digital, press the red button for 'off', so that you don't have to watch this rubbish any more *(Cont. p. 94)*

That EU Crisis Dinner Menu in full

French Whine

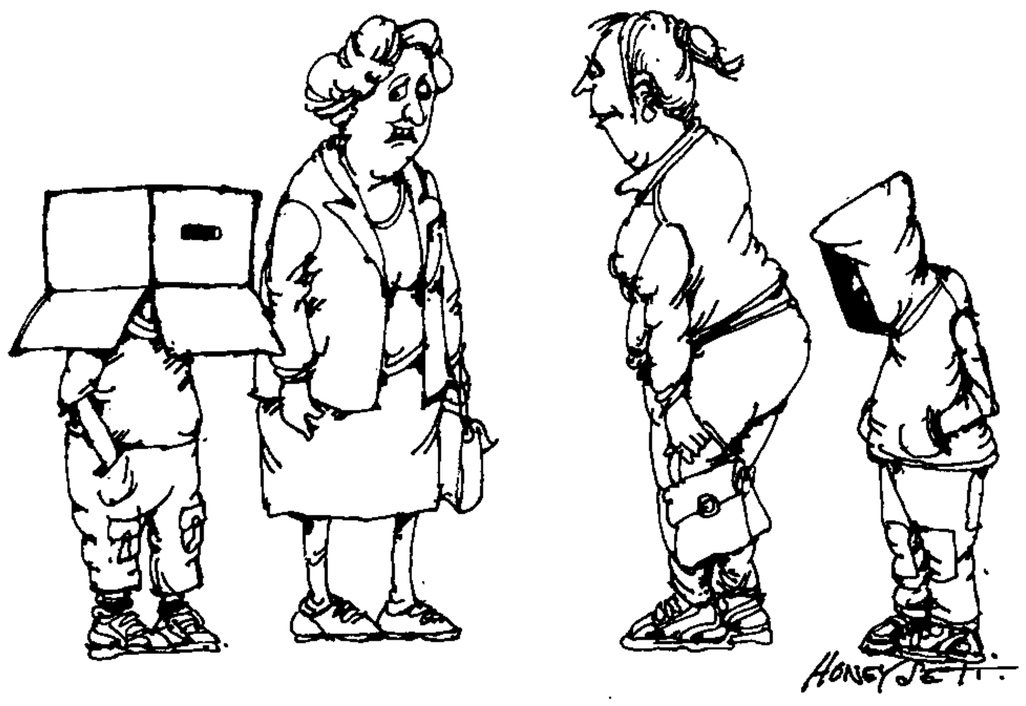
– ❋ –

Sour Kraut

– ❋ –

British Beef

(That's enough. Ed)



"He's very good – he never complains when I can't afford things for him"

'DEVIL IN CHURCH' SHOCK

by Our Media Staff **Stephen Glove**

THE WORLD of Fleet Street was gathered together for the last time yesterday, when hundreds of editors, politicians and people hoping for a job attended a service of thanksgiving at St Bride's Church to celebrate the end of the British newspaper industry.

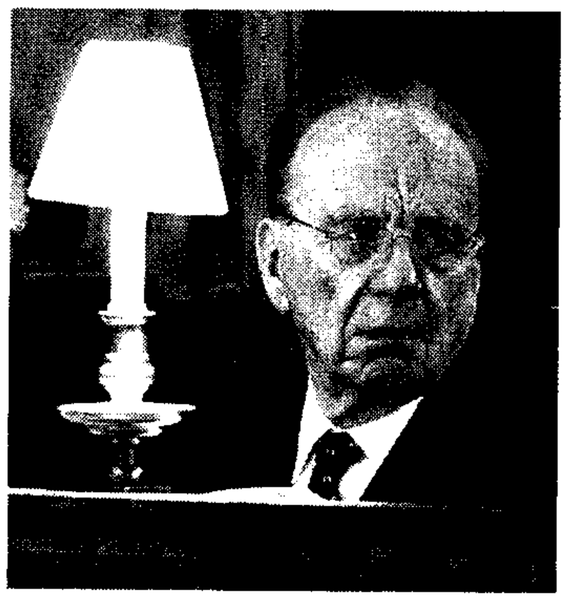
The star guest was the man who had contributed most to that process, Mr Rupert Moloch, surrounded by a coven of imps and demons, including Ms Rebekah Witch and the late Kelvin McBeelzebub.

The Devil, dressed in a neat fireproof suit and showing no signs of his 7,380,000 million years, mounted the lectern to read a famous passage from his own version of what he introduced as 'the Bad Book'.

The lesson began:

"Let us now praise famous men and our fathers, who left us enough money to buy up pretty well every newspaper in this godforsaken little hole called Britain..."

At this point there was laughter from the assembled dignitaries,

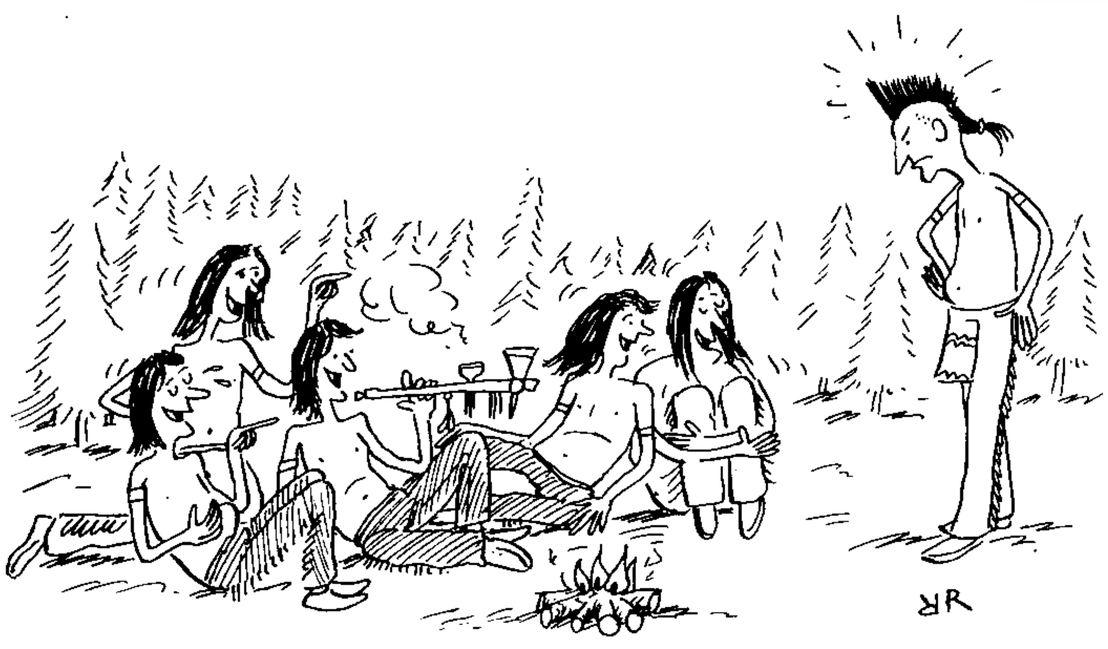


including most of the Cabinet, who were being prodded with forks by the aforementioned imps and demons.

The Rector of St Bride's, Canon Flannel, later led the congregation in a rousing selection of hymns, including "He's Got The Whole News Of The World In His Hand", "I've Got The Sun In The Morning And The Sky At Night" and "The Times They Are A-Changin' To A Tabloid".

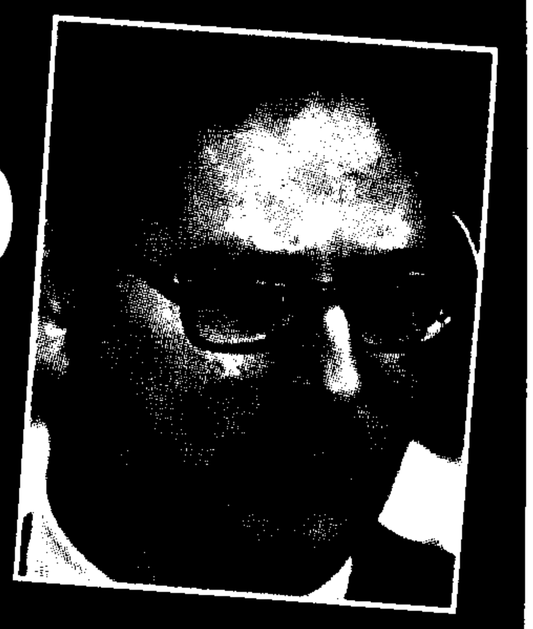
A reception was later held at the Hellfire Club in Mayfair.

(Reuters. New address: Unit 317, The Trading Estate, Peterborough)



The First of the Mohicans

THE SHATTERED WORLD OF 'WACKO' LAWSON



by Our Showbiz Staff **SARAH SANDWICH**

TODAY the world of "Wacko" Lawson, the one-time golden boy of Sunday newspaper journalism, crashed in ruins.

At his £200 million Sussex ranch, Neveronsundaytelegraph-land, the blinds are drawn and no one is answering the door.

King of Pap

The legendary figure whose greatest hits included "I Discover Lord Lucan", "I Discover Lord Lucan Again" and "Pope To Wed Gay Partner", towered for 20 years over the industry that had given him fame and fortune.

But no more. Friends say he is "a shattered man". His weight is down to 26 stone, his face is a deathly shade of red and at times, says an intimate, "He scarcely seems to know where he is, or what he is doing".

Very Bad

"Wacko" Lawson, so called because of the countless stories about his bizarre and inappropriate behaviour, now faces an uncertain future.

Having been born into a leading showbiz family, Wacko found fame early when his father, Fatso Lawson (now Thinso), put him on the public stage alongside his sister Nigella.

They quickly became the nation's favourite showbiz double-act, until the raven-haired Nigella teamed up with her new partner Screaming Lord Saatchi.

He's History

Wacko began to live in a fantasy world of his own, convinced that one day he would achieve the supreme goal of editing the Daily Telegraph.

But it was not to be. Yesterday the jury of two, Fred and Dave Barclay, pronounced their unrelenting verdict – "you're fired".

And at a stroke, for one 46-year-old superstar, the clock stopped.

ON OTHER PAGES ● "I shouldn't have put paper to bed with bores in it," admits Lawso.

Dominic Lawson – What will he do now?

YOU DECIDE!!

FOLLOWING his departure from the Sunday Telegraph, Dominic Lawson is now looking for a new job. Tick the box below which you think would showcase his talents best, and you can win a dinner for two in a top London gastro-pub with new Sunday Telegraph editor gorgeous, pouting Sarah Sandy Shaw.

- ☐ Leader of Tory Party
- ☐ Chess correspondent for Mid-Kent Courier
- ☐ Dictator of South American Republic (Bolivia currently vacant)
- ☐ Security guard to the Lord Saatchi Art Collection
- ☐ Manager of Millwall Football Club
- ☐ Writing unpublished article for the Spectator on "How I Got the Sack!"
- ☐ Clamping officer for Westminster City Council

197 TORY MPs TO STAND FOR LEADERSHIP

by Our Political Staff **Peter O'Bore**

LATE LAST night it emerged that every single Tory MP has now thrown his or her hat into the ring in the great Tory leadership battle.

The contenders now include such little-known figures as Caspian Nicebloke (Lymeswold), Thelma Goodsort (Emmerdale), Timothy Wellmeaning (Telford), and Sir Malcolm Rifkind (Warminster-on-Sea).

Going To Lose Again

Analysts were predicting that on the first round, the results will be "extremely close", since every candidate is likely to score one vote.

Last night, the Party finally decided on the rules which will dictate how the new leader is chosen.

The 197 different voting procedures which were under discussion included a complex formula whereby a "panel of experts" would be selected to draw up a short-list of not less than 10 and not more than 197 candidates, whose names will then be offered to a National Convention of Tory grandees, assisted by a series of "focus groups" made up of voters who have never before supported the Party, who will then offer a "short short-list" to go forward to the second round, where local parties will form regional adjudication committees who will *(That's enough complex procedures. Ed.)*

Other proposals included:

- **A penalty shoot-out**
- **Drawing names from a hat**
- **Big Brother-style text vote via those new Blackberry devices**
- **Asking Mrs Thatcher to come back.**

However, in the end, the MPs decided to choose the method which would give maximum annoyance to their present leader Mr Howard – ie, one MP, one vote, one more defeat.

IS IT TIME FOR A GAY TORY LEADER?

AT THE risk of sounding old-fashioned, we have to say that we still have misgivings about senior homosexuals declaring themselves to be Tories.

This is not mere prejudice, since nowadays there are many openly Tory individuals in all walks of life and being a member of a minority group like the Tories should not be held against anyone in public life.

Nevertheless, for many gays, the thought of what Tories get up to in private seems unnatural and unsavoury and their activities strike many as *(cont. p. 94)*

MAY SPELLS IT OUT

Who Are They – The Latest Front-Runners To Have Declared Themselves Since We Last Reported On The Latest Front-Runners In The Previous Issue?

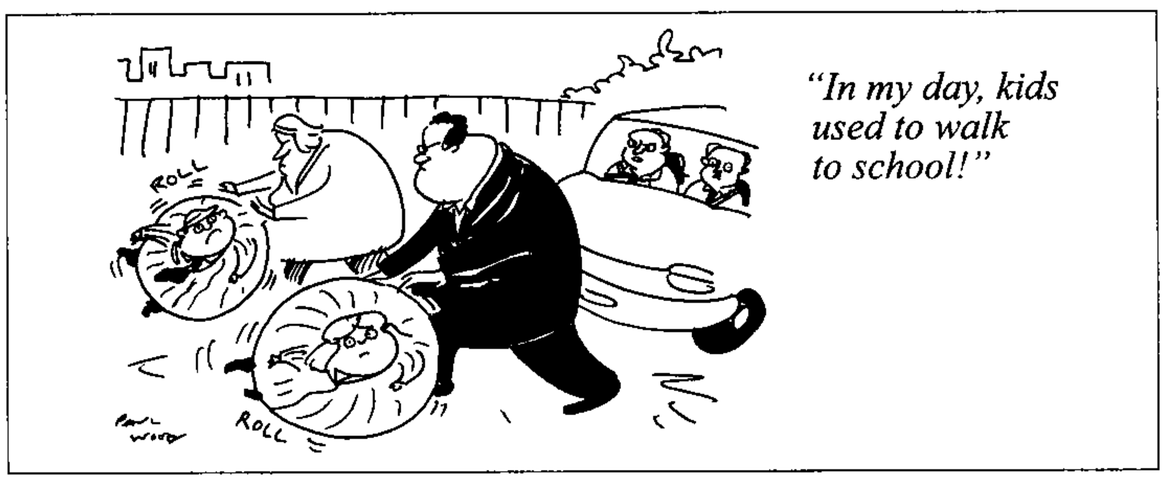
Alan Duncan-Smith: Gay moderniser with strong traditionalist left-of-centre support **500/1**

Tim Neo: Liberal Conservative with moderniser tendencies and ability to appeal to the centre wing of the Tory left **250/1**

Dr Liam Duck: Fast-rising right-wing moderate with strong moderniser tendencies. "I'm just an ordinary bloke", he likes to sway, when abseiling down Big Ben in the hope that someone will put his picture in the paper. **400/1**

Sue Putney: Blonde bombshell who appeals to newspaper

editors desperate to spice up boring articles like this with pictures of anyone who isn't a man in a suit. **1000/1**

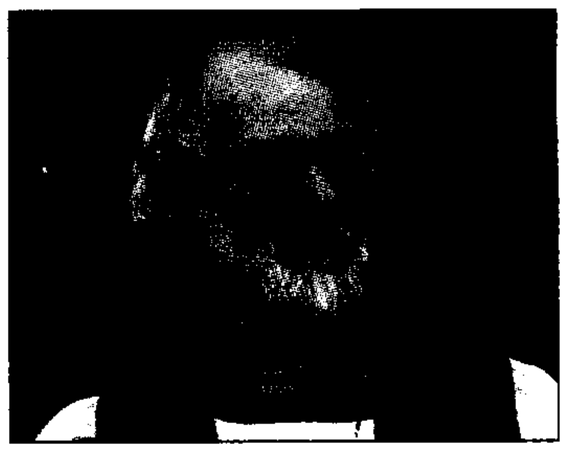


"In my day, kids used to walk to school!"

ARCHBISHOP CRITICISES 'LETHAL MEDIA' FOR 'DISTORTION AND CYNICISM'

by Our Religious Affairs Staff **Lunchtime O'Pews**

A BEARDED half-wit yesterday ranted incomprehensibly about the media instead of focusing on his own problems i.e. that the only people who go to church are gay vicars and mad women bishops and anyway he doesn't even believe in God I read it in the *Sunday Telegraph* and he's only spouting all this rubbish in a desperate attempt to get publicity for his rotten church which no one goes to except gays and women bishops why should we take any notice of a man who doesn't know how to shave and wears a frock for a living? and yet he's got the nerve to accuse us of making things up well I heard it on good authority that Old Beardie has nicked all the lead from Canterbury Cathedral roof and



Paranoid loony: Dr Rowan Atkinson

That Archbishop's Damning Indictment In Full

"The role of the media in contemporary Britain, whilst necessarily compromised by its enmeshment in the dictates of the commercial imperative, is nonetheless open to justifiable criticism when one examines the layers of subjective motivation which lie behind the imagined independence of the editorial process, especially when filtered through the supposed demands of topicality which is itself conditioned by the paradigm of an auxiliary framework modelled on (cont. p. 94)

"Lady, I mentally undressed you hours ago. I've mentally dressed you, had a cigarette and gone home and read a good book since then"

PINK TURDS TO RE-FORM FOR LIVE8

by Our Showbiz Staff PHIL STADIUM

THE GREATEST rock band in the history of the world, The Pink Turds, has announced that it is to re-form in order to save Africa.

The lead singer of the legendary 60s popular singing group, "Spiggy" Topes (now Sir Spigismond Topes, O.M., K.G.), has told a packed press conference yesterday, "The Turds have not performed live for 20 years, mostly due to the fact that the others are all dead."

He continued, "To be honest, we have not spoken to each other for decades but we have decided not to let such trivial matters stand in the way of our being given the top job at Live8 of abolishing poverty forever.

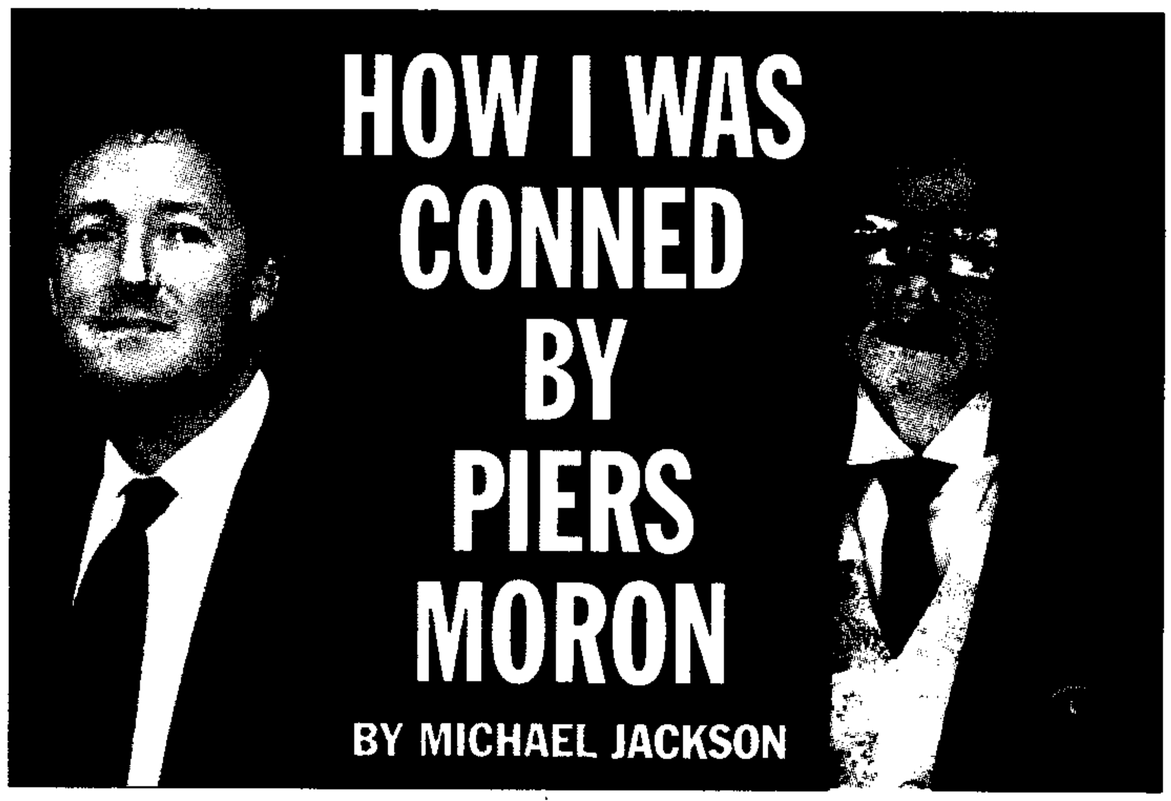
"When Bob rang me to ask if I was still alive, I could not say no to him.

"This will be a gig to remember, as it will be an extraordinary moment when today's audience can once again hear the unique sound of Topes, together with the late Raymond Fortescue-Watson, Justin Jervis Protheroe and Sydney "Sid" Weems, our legendary drummer."

Said poverty campaigner and event organiser Sir Bob Fockoff last night, "It is great news that the Turds are back to headline the greatest rock'n'roll show the world has ever seen."

Nelson Mandela is 106.

DAILY MAIL EXCLUSIVE



IT was the most surreal encounter in all my mad years in the media. There I was on the end of a phone, talking to a man who claimed to be Piers Moron. And he was!

Amazingly, 'Moron' wanted to talk to me and I fell for it like a sucker. By turns earnest, flippant, self-pitying, joking, laughing, sobbing, 'Moro' tried to persuade me that he was really a great guy and not at all the moron that everyone claimed.

"They tell wicked lies about me, Michael," he said, in that little boy voice. "All that stuff about money and shares and photos and sex, but none of it is true. All I want to do is help people by telling their stories." He continued, "I have a talent which I want to share with the world. Does that make me a bad person?"

AND fool that I was, star-struck and naïve in the presence of such a global figure, I believed every word that Moron said.

Now I realise I was the victim of the master of manipulation and deceit. He sounded normal, but he is nothing more than a conman and I should never have got into bed with him.

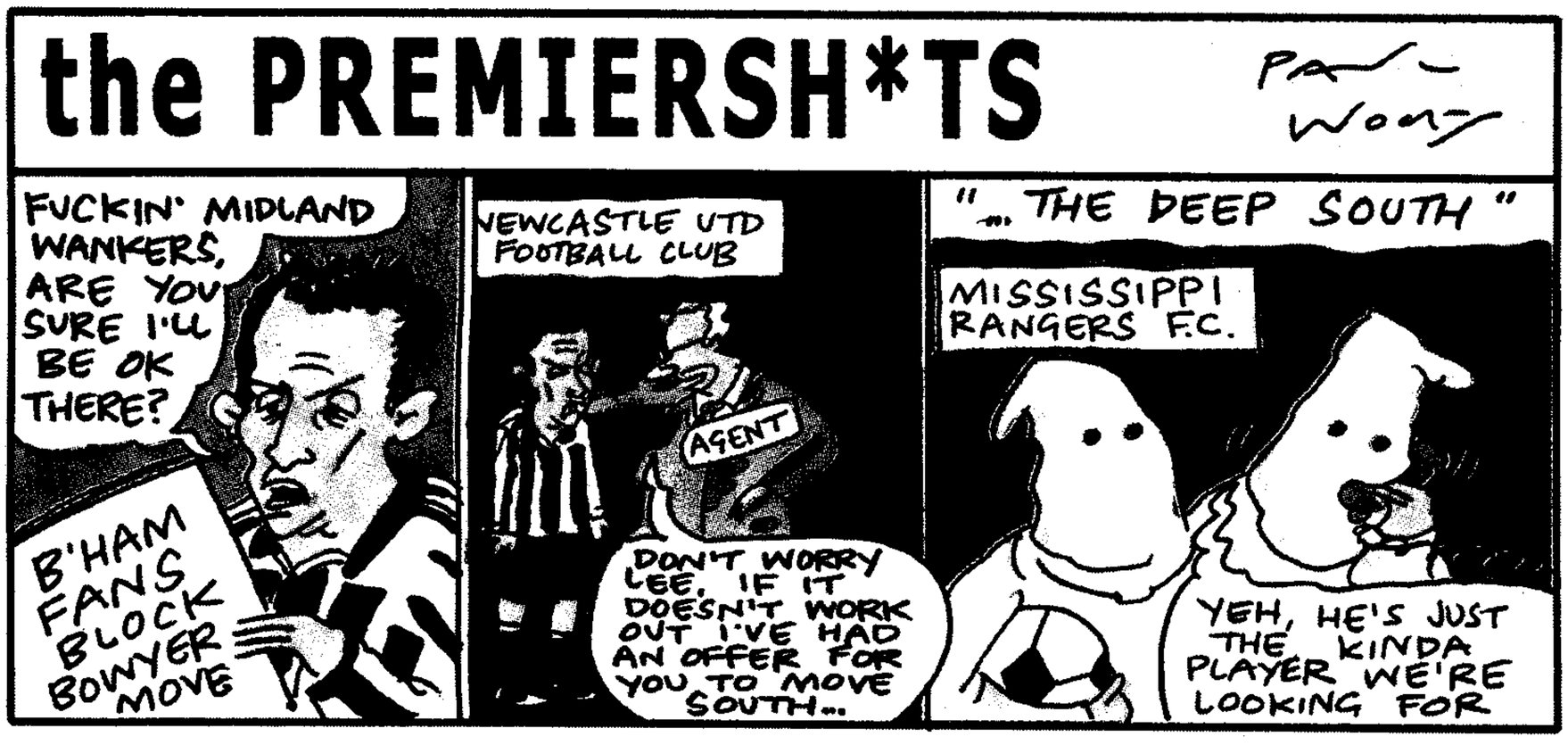
© Michael Jackson 2005.

RADIO 4
DIXON OF DOCK GREEN

What You Missed

Dixon: It's been another busy night on the beat folks... something tells me those Eastern Europeans will think twice about running a child prostitution ring on my patch again – and let's not forget my new sidekick Crawford... OK, the young whippersnapper might be a little bit green, but he certainly made sure those Yardie types went off with their tails between their legs! I've got a feeling that's the last time they'll try and flood the neighbourhood with cheap crack cocaine, before cashing in when everyone's hooked... Evening all.

(Harmonica-type music plays out)


the PREMIERSH*TS
PAUL WOOLEY
FUCKIN' MIDLAND WANKERS, ARE YOU SURE I'LL BE OK THERE?
B'HAM FANS BLOCK BOWYER MOVE
NEWCASTLE UTD FOOTBALL CLUB
AGENT
DON'T WORRY LEE, IF IT DOESN'T WORK OUT I'VE HAD AN OFFER FOR YOU TO MOVE SOUTH...
"... THE DEEP SOUTH"
MISSISSIPPI RANGERS F.C.
YEH, HE'S JUST THE KINDA PLAYER WE'RE LOOKING FOR

THE DAILY TELEGRAPH

Court Circular

Today's Birthdays

Viscount Barkworth, former Tree Surgeon Royal, 94; **Rear Admiral Sir Sandy Sandington-Sands**, Naval Attaché, 78; **The Right Reverend P.D.Q. Trouser-press**, former Dean of St Ivel's, 86; **Miss Elizabeth Hurley**, actress, 40. Can you believe it? Blimey, she looks good. More like Phwoarty! I wouldn't say no, I can tell you! Phwoarrrrr...!! *(Why isn't this on the front page? Ed.)*

The Secret Diary of Sir John Major KG aged 63¾

Monday

Today was in my judgement perhaps the most historic day even in my not inconsiderably historic life. Oh yes. Today, as I announced to my wife Norman at breakfast, in what I hope was a suitably historic voice, I am to become a "KG". "Oh yes?" she replied, "is that some sort of new breakfast cereal?" – as usual completely missing

the point. I had to inform her that, on the contrary, it is not a breakfast cereal at all, but a very important and ancient order of chivalry, going back to the Middle Ages and the days of the Grey Prince himself.

"How did you know that?" she asked. "Did you read it on the back of your cornflake packet?" "No," I rejoinded, becoming in no small measure somewhat irritated by her failure to recognise the importance of my historic day. "No," I told her. "If you must know, I looked it up on the internet. KG stands for Knight of the Garter, of which I have the very great honour to become one. Only Her Majesty herself is permitted to select the Knights, who must be 'brave, steadfast and pure of heart'."

"Well," said Norman. "It is just as well that she doesn't read the newspapers or your name might have been struck off."

Tuesday

My great day began extremely badly. I was trying on my special ceremonial robes, which I was just tucking into my trousers, when my brother Terry appeared at the door holding a new gnome he had made, dressed in identical robes to the ones I was currently donning.

"It's a 'Garter Gnome'," he announced. "D'you see – like 'Garden Gnome' except with 'Garter' instead of 'Garden'."

"Terry," I told him. "That is neither in any way funny or amusing."

"I was hoping you might give it to Her Majesty as a souvenir of your great day. And, by the way," he went on, "there is a special message written on the garter."

When I looked closely I saw the words "Thinking of you, big boy! Edwina". I was beyond incandescence in my rage as I drove off in the specially hired mini-cab which was to drive me to the ceremony.

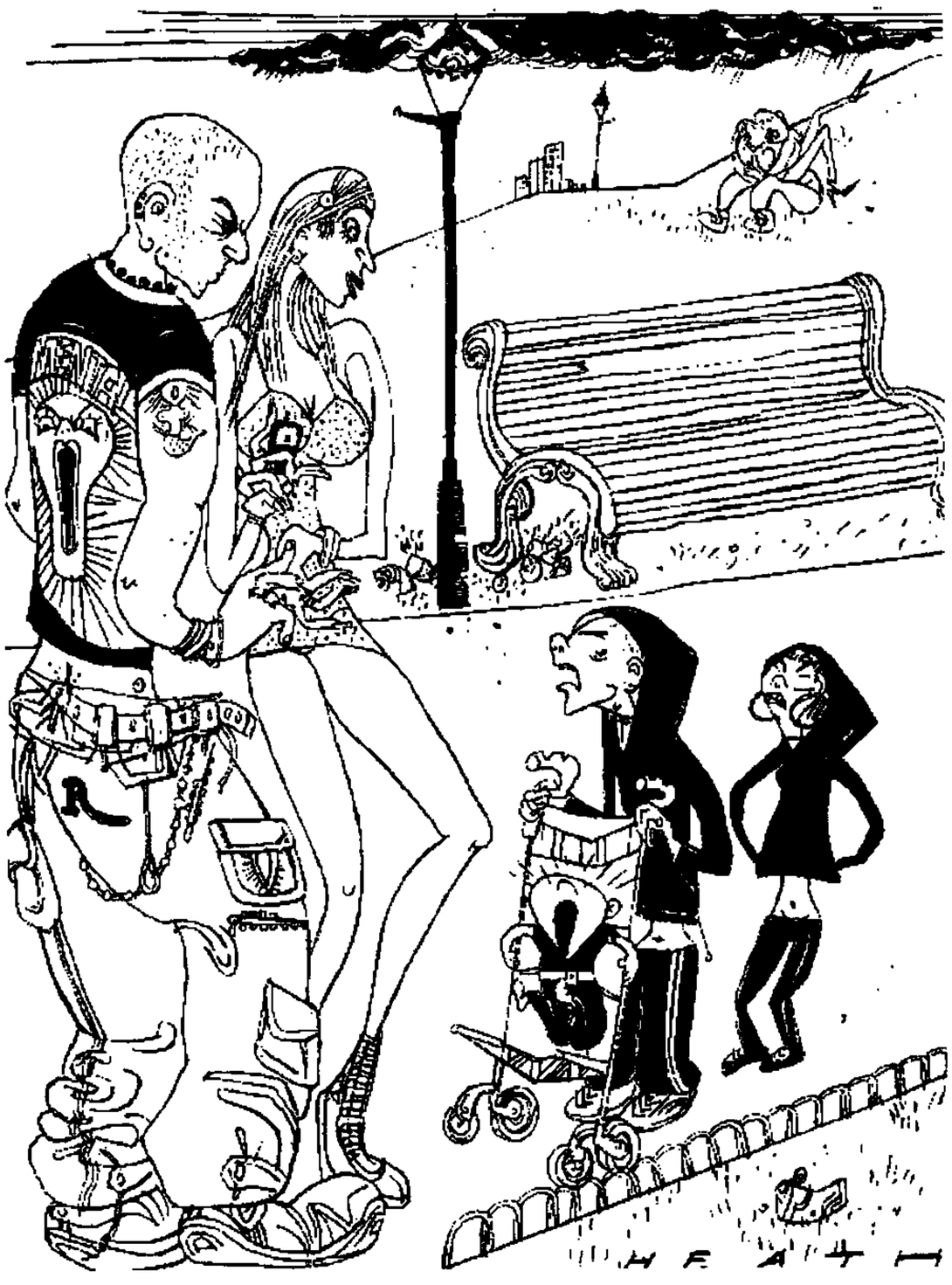
"What are you going as?" asked the driver, as we travelled in style down the M4. "Batman or what?"

I told him that, on the contrary, I was dressed as a Knight of the Garter and that should he wish to know more about it he should consult www.knightofthegarter.com on the "History Comes Alive" website. This shut him up, and he remained suitably chastened until we arrived at the historic Windsor Castle, where he said, "Shall I drop you here, squire, or will you fly the last bit?"

The procession was not inconsiderably impressive as I joined it, standing alongside none other than His Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh, who I recognised from his photographs in the paper. All around me was the flower of English chivalry, dressed in their finery. And there was I, one of them at last, one of the great and the good, with my specially designed coat of arms showing two biros rampant guarding a clipboard couchant superscribed with a parchment volume carrying the Gothic title 'Ye Booke Of Ye Bastards' over the motto 'Non inconsiderabile'.

Unfortunately, at that moment, who should I see bearing down on me but the woman whose name I never mention, i.e. Mrs Thatcher, also dressed as a Knightess of the Garter.

"Are you one of the new ones?" she cried out in her only too familiar voice. "It's funny, but you look just like that ghastly little man who they got to run the country after me and made such a mess of it."



"We aren't playing mummies and daddies – we are *a mummy and daddy!"*

Advertisement

The first trolley to roll off the production line from Tesco's new Longbridge plant has all the features you've come to expect in a model like this – wheels that start going off in four separate directions in zero to ten seconds, state of the art steering, a neat compact turning circle and cruising speed of up to six miles an hour faster than your old Rover could manage going up a hill... all of which makes the Tesco 75 the perfect family supermarket trolley. ● Tesco 75 model features supermarket plastic bags as standard.

SAYS TV'S MARGARET HODGE:
'TESCO – THE RIDE OF YOUR LIFE!'

ME AND MY SPOON

THIS WEEK

HUGH LAURIE

Do you have a favourite spoon?

I never feel my spoons are any good. I'm plagued with self-doubt about my collection. Are they really worth having? Or are people just being kind when they like my spoons. I don't know.

I gather your father was keen on spoons?

I was always a bit in awe of my father's spoons and I felt I could never live up to his example as a great spoon man. He was my hero spoon-wise.

You're a great success in America now. What are the spoons like over there?

It's been a bizarre experience for me. I never expected to be using American spoons and I keep thinking people are going to see through me and say, "You're a fraud. Stick to your English spoons buddy." But everyone's been very kind and I'm committed to American spoons for the next four years.

Your character, Dr Gregory House, what is his attitude to spoons?

He hates spoons. Almost as much as he hates patients. And yet here's the irony, his dislike of spoons doesn't stop him using them in emergency operations. But he has got a proper job, unlike me. I'm just an actor.

Has anything amusing ever happened to you in connection with a spoon?

You should really ask Stephen Fry this question. He would come up with a hilarious spoon anecdote because he is a genius and he can do everything. Act, write, direct, tell spoon stories. I'm just an actor. Er... do you mind if we leave it there, I'm feeling rather depressed now. Thank you.

NEXT WEEK: *Russell Crowe – "Me and My Crow".*

GOVERNMENT WINS LOTTERY

by Our Lotto Staff **Ian Jackpot**

A SCOTTISH recluse living in central London today collected the biggest-ever lottery win on behalf of a syndicate known as 'New Labour'.

A smiling but dour Mr Gordon Brown received the cheque from Mrs Tessa Jowell, the well-known Hampstead celebrity, and told reporters, "I have been dreaming for years of getting my hands on this money. And now it is mine, all mine! Millions of it!"

What A Lottery I Got

Asked how he intended to spend the money, Mr Brown replied, "It will not change my way of life a scrap. I hope to spend it on schools and hospitals and all those things I would have to waste government money on.

"Now, thanks to my Lotto win [estimated odds 1 in 1], I won't have to raise taxes quite as much as I'm going to have to do anyway."

Mr Brown admitted to reporters that he had ticked the box for "No Publicity" because he had not wanted the public to know that he had stolen all their money.

ON OTHER PAGES

- *"I stand by every word I didn't write"* – **Gary Lineker** *in the Libel Trial of the Century* **2**
- *Can house prices give you bowel cancer?* **3**
- *Did Cherie Blair get Michael Jackson off?* **94**

That Upcoming Chequers Guest List In Full

What You Aren't On

Saturday 12th July

Dame Marjorie Scardino, Chairman Financial Times Group; **Ms Charlene Murdoch**, Chief Executive, Shanghai Shopping Channel; **Ms Rebekah Filth**, Editor, The Sun Newspaper; **Sir Roy Meadow**, paediatrician; **Mr Wayneford Rooney**, footballer; **Ms Coleen McChav**, Mr Wayneford Rooney's partner; **Prince Palazzio Fribi**, Tuscan holiday home owner; **Miss Ruperta Murdoch**, Chief Executive, Sky Porn Plc; **Sir David Bowie**, popular singer; **Sir Rorold Bremner**, impressionist; **Sir Ant and Sir Dec**, television personalities; **Miss Jade Goody**, reality television personality; **Baroness Jay**, politician and stateswoman; **Mr Boomerang Murdoch**, Chief Executive, the Murdoch Boomerang Channel *("The programmes keep coming back")*; **Sir Robert Harris**, novelist and bon viveur; **Mr Crazy Frog**, popular singer; **Miss Sarah Sands**, late replacement for Mr D. Lawson.

News in Brief

FAMOUS MAN FOUND FAMOUS

THE WORLD of showbusiness was stunned by the news that a famous man has been found famous in an American court of law.

A spokesman for the Jackson family said, "Twelve good men and women true have proved what we always knew, that the famous man is very famous indeed, and *(cont. p. 94)*

JORDAN HAS PUBLICITY

SHOWBUSINESS sources have revealed that celebrity Jordan is said to be "overjoyed" at having more publicity.

A spokesman for Jordan said, "Mother and baby story is doing very well, thank you very much, and we're told that it'll probably weigh in at around one hundred thousand pounds or more."

BEST ARRESTED FOR SOMETHING OR OTHER

IT'S been revealed that police have arrested soccer legend George Best for something he's meant to have done.

On Other Pages

- Best Helps Police With Their Enquiries
- Best Helps Editors Fill Space

CAMILLA ON BALCONY

DIARY

ANDREW NEIL (Chairman): Good to see you! We're here to discuss the Conservative Party. Remember them?!!! Back in the Eighties, you could walk down the King's Road in your finest cravat, braces and flares, a lovely young lady on each arm, swinging to something with a bit of a beat to it by The Bee Gees, and still find plenty of time to edit THE leading Sunday newspaper. So what went wrong? Charles?

CHARLES MOORE: One reason that people used to vote Tory was that Tory MPs always wore lovely tweed suits. And they respected them for it. But nowadays they see them in off-the-peg grey or black suits, many of them two-piece and without watch-chains, and consequently they have no one to look up to. And we wonder why so many unmarried teenagers have triplets and nose-rings!

MICHAEL HESELTINE: We've got to look to the future, Charles. It all comes back to Westland. Thatcherism was a disaster for this country. I mean, backing the Sikorsky bid! Really! Talk about cloud-cuckoo-land. Ordinary people knew that Sikorsky was wholly unsuited to the task. But did she listen? Of course she didn't. And that's why we're in the mess in which we find ourselves today. Cloud-cuckoo-land!

LIAM FOX: There is a crying need for framing a wide-ranging debate within the party on the whole issue of the need for framing a wide-ranging debate. We must generate debate with the country at large. Only the other day, I was talking to a gentleman in Solihull. And later in the week, I went abseiling. And after that I spoke to a gentleman from Birmingham. We've got to learn lessons.

IAIN DUNCAN SMITH: I agree with Liam. I spoke to the same gentleman from Solihull. Or if not exactly the same gentleman, jolly nearly. And he agreed with me. And I agree with Liam. And so did he. Over the past two years, I've been going up and down the country, and I've found a very strong measure of agreement. What people in the country are saying is there's a crying need for a firm measure of agreement.

LIAM FOX: And we mustn't be afraid to tackle problems either. Or raise serious issues. That's at the root of it. Incidentally, did anyone see that photo of me abseiling? It attracted a lot of comment, which must be good for the Party. I'm hoping to go down a mine soon, and they're letting me wear a miner's helmet with a little torch on it. As a party, we really mustn't be afraid to wear different hats.

CONSERVATIVE

THE WAY AHEAD

CHARLES MOORE: I couldn't disagree more. People don't want us to wear different hats, they want us to wear our traditional hat. The reason we lost the last election is because none of our candidates wore a trilby. If the Conservative Party fails to pick a leader who promises to wear tweeds and a trilby, it'll be out of power for a generation.

MICHAEL HESELTINE: Thatcherism was a disaster. There was a crying need for a leader with a proven record of supporting the European consortium over the narrow Sikorsky bid. Believe me, Charles, the people out there - ordinary people doing ordinary little jobs, candlestick makers and so forth - never trusted Thatcher, not one little bit. I know, because I've spoken to them and I told them so.

IAIN DUNCAN SMITH: How are we going to win poor people back, Michael? I've set up my very own foundation to tackle the whole problem of poor people. I go up and down the country shaking their hands, asking them what it's like to be poor. From what they tell me, it's very much like being rich, but without the money. But for goodness sake, let's not throw money at them, that's the last thing they want.

CHARLES MOORE: The only way to get poor people to vote Conservative is to promise them major cuts in their state handouts. At the moment, they absolutely hate all that free money coming in, hand over fist, jamming up their post-boxes and making their cleaning-ladies' lives a misery. It makes them feel dependent and they simply don't know what to do with it, so they spend it all on binge-drinking and having teenage babies when what they really yearn for is the days of real poverty, when people would go from house to house offering one another nutritious scraps and the friendly old barrow-man would call on them with a cheery nod and a wink, asking them to bring out their dead.

LIAM FOX: There's a strong argument for cutting tax. And there's an equally strong argument for raising tax. Personally, I favour both. And we've got to debate the whole issue of Britain's position in the world. Yes, we're to the West of Europe. But we're also to the East of America. Unless you go the other way round the globe, in which case we're West of America but a long way East of Europe. There's a strong argument for both. And next week I'm going on a Fun Run in a baseball cap to draw attention to it.

THERESA MAY: The Conservatives are seen as negative and out of touch and indifferent.

IAIN DUNCAN SMITH: No, we're not. And who cares if we are, anyway?

ANDREW NEIL: The younger generation are naturally Eurosceptic. They'd much rather go to Los Angeles than Paris. They like to go clubbing at Tramp till the early hours, and to swing to the very latest from Andy Williams, preferably with a delicious young lady in their arms, wearing something that leaves precious little to the imagination and with a cooling glass of ice-cold Dubonnet to hand. But you don't see this reflected anywhere in your party's foreign policy. I mean, get a life, you guys!

MICHAEL HESELTINE: It all boils down to leadership, Andrew. The Party desperately needs someone who can cut a dash on the international stage, someone with a proven track record as a party leader, someone who's prepared to embrace private enterprise whilst continuing to safeguard the public sector, someone who can bridge the divide: someone like Tony Blair, in fact, but perhaps a bit younger. For my money, a Conservative Party led by Euan Blair would be a tremendously exciting prospect.

THERESA MAY: But he's not black, Michael. We don't want to send out the wrong message.

MICHAEL HESELTINE: But Teresa, we live in a technological age. Skin-colour isn't a problem. A simple course of injections, and you wouldn't know him from Bob Marley.

CHARLES MOORE: Robert Morley! Excellent! Just the sort of person who's perfectly suited to be leader of the Conservative Party.

LIAM FOX: But isn't he dead?

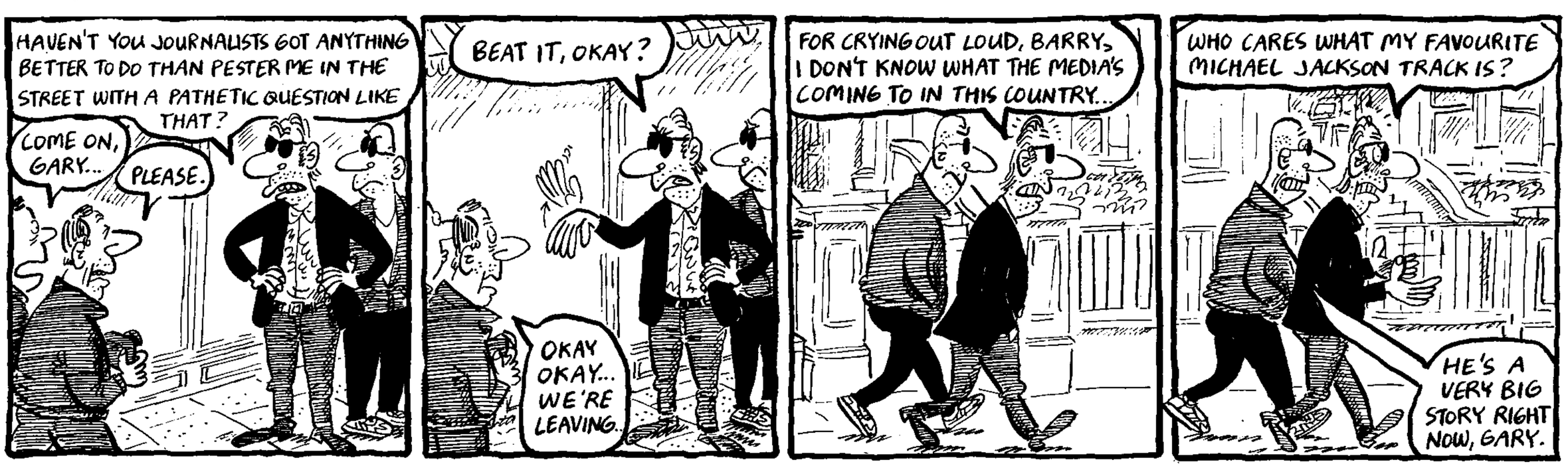
CHARLES MOORE: Exactly!

As told to

CRAIG BROWN

Celeb

LIGGER


HAVEN'T YOU JOURNALISTS GOT ANYTHING BETTER TO DO THAN PESTER ME IN THE STREET WITH A PATHETIC QUESTION LIKE THAT?
COME ON, GARY...
PLEASE.
BEAT IT, OKAY?
OKAY OKAY... WE'RE LEAVING.
FOR CRYING OUT LOUD, BARRY, I DON'T KNOW WHAT THE MEDIA'S COMING TO IN THIS COUNTRY...
WHO CARES WHAT MY FAVOURITE MICHAEL JACKSON TRACK IS?
HE'S A VERY BIG STORY RIGHT NOW, GARY.

Literary Review

Professor Carey and his Critics

NEVER mind the arts, what good is John Carey? Alas, this turned out to be a question that the massed reviewers of Professor Carey's new one (*What Good Are The Arts?* Faber, £12.99) seemed curiously disinclined to answer.

Rarely in the recent history of reviewing, in fact, has quite so much lightly distilled nervousness ebbed forth from the pens of persons who, perennially at large in the hurly burly of the literary world, are not generally averse to dishing it out.

A handy synopsis of the Carey take on aesthetic appreciation was supplied by the *Independent*. No one has ever managed adequately to define what art is – what makes something a work of art is the fact that someone thinks it so. All cultural judgments consequently, are relative; and there is no way of proving that Proust is superior to Parsons. Art can't make you a better person and it's unlikely to make you a worse one. Scientific chuntering about universal standards of perception is so much garbage. Oh, and all those Bloomsbury deadheads and Ms Winterson here who go blathering on about "rapture" are virtually certifiable.

And so caustically and indefatigably on; a fine old display of common man chippiness that in normal circumstances would find messieurs et mesdames the critics tumbling over themselves in their avidity to debunk it. Hang on though, you could imagine everybody thinking, as the advance copies slapped on to the well-appointed desks of half-a-dozen literary gentlefolk last month: this is John Carey, ferociously bright ex-Merton Professor at Oxford we're dealing with here, a demon reviewer liable to turn nasty if provoked. The result was a terrific mass cop-out in which critic after critic found excellent reasons for stepping aside from the debate, declining to engage with the proposals before them or pursuing some private agenda of their own.

The exception to this ingenious rule was Jeanette Winterson who, having found her own views on the subject dismissed as "barely sane", let her assailant have it with both barrels in the *Times*. Over in the *Sunday Times*, on the other hand, through whose pages Carey has disputatiously roamed these past 28 years, David Lodge waxed horribly emollient, largely confining himself to a summary of the argument and wetly concluding that: "This is an informative, thought-provoking and entertaining book on a subject that rarely produces writing with all three qualities."

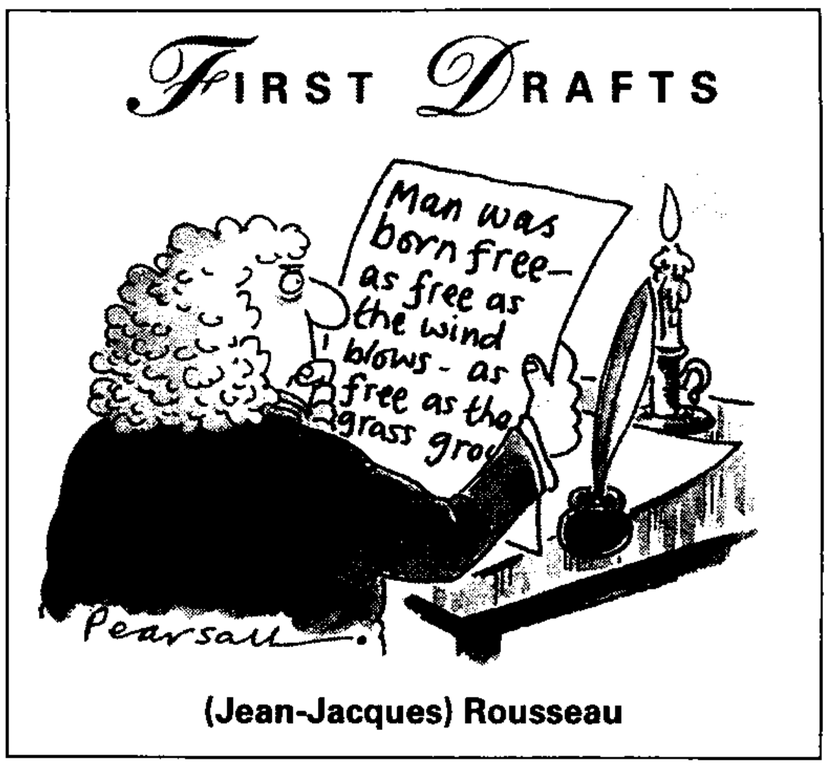
Oh well, no problem about this year's Christmas card then! Much the same line, give or take a snare or two, was taken by Rupert Christiansen in the *Spectator*. Come the second half of the book, in which Carey sets out to establish literature's manifest superiority to anything else on the block, our man had apparently executed an "audacious volte-face" which made his arguments "even more dizzyingly provocative". So that's all right then.

Being a paid-up man of the people himself, Bloke Morrison in the *Guardian* had no trouble at all in joining the procession. "I found myself putting ticks in the margin and laughing at the jokes far more often than I disagreed." Why, Morrison signed off, the next time the post of chair of the Arts Council is up for grabs, someone ought to nominate him!

Terry Eagleton in the *New Statesman*, meanwhile, didn't know which way to turn. On the one hand you could see him itching to commend Carey's sneers at the cultural mandarins, conscious all the while, though, that the book "makes judgements all the time, despite cutting the ground for these opinions from under its own feet". Generous in spirit but biting off more than it could chew, was his charitable conclusion.

The gravest dereliction of all, however, came courtesy of D.J. Taylor in the *Independent*, who for reasons best known to himself opted to evade the duty of confronting Carey head-on by pretending to believe that the Carey stance was itself a pretence. Our man was, he maintained, merely having a bit of fun. "I don't believe that he really believes very much of this," Taylor anxiously concluded. "I think he thinks – for reasons on which it is profitless to speculate – that he ought to believe it, which is a rather different thing."

On the contrary, the evidence of the accompanying press profiles suggested that Professor C believed every word of it. The *Sunday Times* found him reminiscing about his suburban childhood in Barnes, and the upper-class "drips" promoted over his head in National Service. Lucasta Miller's excellent portrait in the *Guardian* dilated on the frightful toffs who had offended him during a 1950s lectureship at Christchurch, Oxford. No point, perhaps, in invoking the spirit of Anthony Powell, a writer who always has Carey gnashing his teeth in rage, but at the heart of all this, surely, lies a Question of Upbringing. Fifty years in an Oxford common room is as nothing in the face of these cultural prejudices – alas, Professor Carey *will* go on preferring chavs to chaps.



(Jean-Jacques) Rousseau

BOOKS & BOOKMEN

■ HATS OFF to Penguin, celebrating its 70th by clogging bookshop aisles with spinners full of pocket paperbacks to show off how important its list is.

This is of course a rehash of its 1995 promotion, the Penguin 60s, which sold like hot cakes but had the slight disadvantage of costing the punters only 60p. This time the books are an inflation-busting £1.50, and each spinner is several hundred pounds' worth of business. Penguin isn't sharing the wealth, though: its publicity wonks have let it be known that the 70 freelance designers of the new covers were paid only £70 a pop – a fraction of standard rates.

According to Penguin, of course, it isn't a sales promotion at all, but a birthday celebration predicated on the notion that Penguin is somehow different from all of those nasty big publishers owned by international media conglomerates. "Now you can own a piece of the Penguin story," it proclaims – and, at the same time, er, a piece of the (international media conglomerate) Pearson story too!

■ REPS -- the people who sell books to the booksellers on the publishers' behalf – seem to be a dying breed.

Penguin laid off seven salespeople in March, leaving 16, while Headline has restructured its sales force and HarperCollins is in the process of making seven of its 16 field sales reps redundant.

In the olden days, booksellers and department managers in the chains would build up relationships with the reps who knew what they would be able to sell. Sometimes a rep's personal enthusiasm for a title could rub off on the bookseller and result in surprise localised successes.

Now in the case of the chains, centralised buying systems are in place, favouring dead-cert successes with shedloads of marketing backup. Branch autonomy is a thing of the past, and the number of reps required has diminished. The new way is easier and more efficient, but does it make for a healthy diversity in the books to be found in the nation's stores? Probably not.

It is also bad news for the independents that remain: with no centralised buying to fall back on, they still need reps to visit them, and many are concerned that the redundancies are a portent of further retrenchment. They could get the books from wholesalers, but if repping still works, and many independents claim it does, why get rid of it?

■ NOT content with trying for 18 months to prevent Simon & Schuster publishing a biography about her, Lady Archer is now trying to ensure it doesn't get any publicity – at least in her home city where she chairs the Addenbrooke's NHS Trust and dispenses largesse.

Not one word about *Mary Archer: For Richer, For Poorer* has appeared in the *Cambridge Evening News*. This may or may not be connected with the bullying tactics of her lawyers, Mischon de Reya, who telephoned the paper's editor the day the book was published to warn him they were "looking carefully" at the book for anything which might damage Lady A's standing in the community.

Could it be possible that her reputation is already damaged by her assertion that her lying crook of a husband is an innocent victim of a miscarriage of justice?

'Bookworm'

SNIPCOCK & TWEED
WHEN YOU'RE PREGNANT YOUR BRAIN GOES TO MUSH AND YOU HAVE MAD CRAVINGS
I'VE GOT TO HAVE A COPY OF THE JOOLS OLIVER BOOK!
MINUS NINE TO ONE

Pseuds Corner

In Venice one of the most important Italian collectors will be hosting a dinner in honour of the duo. "This will be hanging in the room where we are to eat," George proudly declares. Spit on Shit is one of the Fundamental Pictures of 1996 and depicts exactly what it says – a gob of spit sliding down two monumental turds. "Very few art works are called Spit on Shit. It's about being alive in the western world," George says.

GORDON BURN interviews GILBERT and GEORGE, *Guardian*

It is very beautiful, sleek and white. There's something slightly Barbarella about it – instead of pressing the piece of bread in you push a button and it is enclosed and slowly taken down into the toaster. It adds drama and excitement to toasting.

Wallpaper editor JEREMY LANGMEAD on the Dualit toaster, *Independent*

"Bucket" in fact shows Bamforth's heterogeneous perception in extremis. It is painstakingly observed and linguistically taut. It needs to be listened to out loud as well as read in silence:

A bucket stands collecting
rain.
Blunt container, it collects
essence of only ocean
above some dun African
savannah
Capsizer of your head
should you try to plumb it
It irons a puddle; no wider
wetness than its expanding
sense:
matter as a meaning
steadily, irreversibly filling
something (say it bucket,
say it)
at the bottom of its need.

DAVID MORLEY reviews Iain Bamforth's A Place in the World, *Guardian*

Would it really be possible to start Nazi Germany if you'd just been listening to Bob Marley's Exodus back-to-back for the past three weeks and getting stoned? Would the idea of the Holocaust seem so appealing?

Coldplay's CHRIS MARTIN *Guardian*

The Jackson Web site mjjsource.com featured graphics declaring "Innocent" and showing a hand giving a victory sign as a fanfare plays. A scrolling calendar highlights historic events such as "Martin Luther King is born," "The Berlin Wall falls," "Nelson Mandela is freed," and finally, "June 13, 2005, Remember this date for it is a part of HIStory." The reference was to Jackson's 1995 album "HIStory: Past, Present, and Future Book I."

USAToday.com

Pseuds Corporate

Our difference is that every customer walks out of our stores with a "plus" in their bag, something positive, something that adds to who they are, and who they want to be.

From the WH Smith 'Store Employee Application For Employment'

CONTRIBUTORS: James Aber, Daniel Fox, Michael Pearson, Nick Freeman, Clare Hale, Strobes.

£10 paid for all entries

IN THE BACK

PRIVATISING AFRICA

Hope runs dry

TAXPAYERS in Tanzania and the United Kingdom may have to bail out British multinational Biwater after it was booted off a water privatisation project in Africa supported by the British government.

Tanzania awarded Biwater the contract to improve water supplies in its capital, Dar Es Salaam, in 2003. But it angrily cancelled the contract last month claiming Biwater had not made promised investments nor installed new pipes, and that water quality was actually declining.

Biwater is now threatening to sue Tanzania; and if it wins it will be able to claim £2m from the UK's export credit guarantee department (ECGD), the scheme having been one of Tony Blair's pet projects to help Africa.

The $140m World Bank-funded scheme was also made a condition of debt relief by the World Bank. It hit the headlines when it was revealed that the UK's department for international development (DfID) had paid Adam Smith International, the consultancy arm of the free market think tank, to promote the privatisation. Some of the DfID money was even spent on a pop song translated into Swahili (*"Young plants need rain, businesses need investment. Our old industries are like dry crops and privatisation brings the rain. When the harvest comes, there is plenty for everyone"* etc.)

Undeterred by the Tanzania failure, DfID has also paid Adam Smith International at least £2.5m to work on "reforming" Ghana's utilities, the lead project being another water privatisation.

Britain's World Development Movement linked up with the Ghanaian National Coalition Against the Privatisation of Water to oppose the scheme. Though Biwater pulled out of the tender, those reported to have been interested in bidding include United Utilities and Halliburton.

Early results are worrying for the Ghanaian campaigners. After one paper from the DfID-funded Adam Smith International, the local water board introduced pre-pay water meters into Tema, a suburb of Accra. The meters, which would be illegal in the UK, are part of the board's pre-privatisation price adjustments. Adam Smith Institute has also run DFID-funded seminars throughout Ghana to push the dubious benefits of water privatisation.

ID CARDS

Don't give Atos

WHEN Katherine Courtney, head of the ID cards programme at the home office, addressed a conference of Intellect, the computer company trade association, some delegates were dismayed by her comment that early failures in ID card trials did not matter because "the technology will be put through rigorous testing once the bill has passed".

This seemed to suggest that identity cards will become law before the government knows whether or not they work. The home office then confirmed to the *Eye* that "after the legislation has been passed we would look at how to implement the programme".

So far the one "biometric enrolment trial" commissioned by the home office – from French computer firm Atos Origin – has had disappointing results. Facial scans failed to identify a third of the 1,000 trial subjects. The home office told the *Eye* it hasn't a clue why the trial system seems less able to identify the faces, irises or fingerprints of black people. The report of the test says further trials are needed specifically targeted towards black people, though none is currently scheduled.

Atos's contract to do pre-bill ID card work suggests it stands a good chance of winning a share of the contract bonanza when ID cards finally become law. The firm certainly has good links with Labour. Former Labour cabinet minister Lord Barnett chairs Atos Origin (UK), and Atos also helps fund the Labour-friendly think tank the IPPR, backing its forthcoming "Digital Britain" manifesto.

However, Atos was also behind the troubled "E-Booking" scheme for the NHS. While the national audit office (NAO) heavily criticised the health department for failing to get this doctor-to-hospital computer booking system off the ground, it also highlighted the "intermittent fault with authentication" that has "prevented access to the e-booking and other systems" in the Atos set-up.

IBUPROFEN

Painful decisions

THE latest fears about the commonly used painkiller Ibuprofen have alarmed many patients with chronic pain, like arthritis sufferers, who are finding it increasingly difficult to find safe therapeutic treatment.

A recent study from Nottingham University found a significant increase in the risk of heart attacks for those on long term use of Ibuprofen and other non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs). Many patients were switched to NSAIDs – which were always known to cause inflammation and stomach upset in some people – after newer drugs that are gentler on the stomach called Cox2 inhibitors were found last year to increase the risk of heart problems.

Early this year an even bigger group were prescribed Ibuprofen-containing drugs after one of the most widely used and effective painkillers, Co-Proxamol, was withdrawn by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA).

The reason for its withdrawal after many years of effective use was because up to 400 people a year were taking fatal overdoses of the drug, the vast majority being suicides. There has been much criticism by GPs of the decision to withdraw Co-Proxamol because many were finding it impossible to find suitable and effective alternative analgesics to control pain for many patients. They pointed out that as one of the most widely prescribed painkillers, it was more likely to feature in suicides and overdoses simply because more people in severe pain are likely to be taking it.

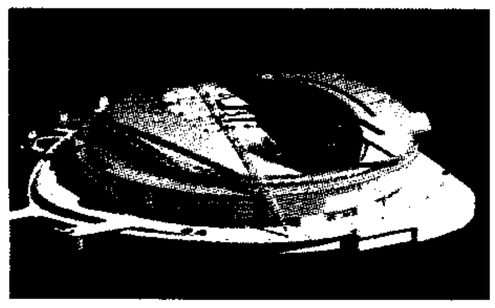
Further, its withdrawal may not lead to the drop in numbers health chiefs were hoping for. People whose pain is not under control may be more susceptible to suicide; alternatives, which also contain small amount of morphine can be equally addictive; and those intent on taking their own lives will find other methods.

As one GP said: "There seems to be no hard evidence that removing this drug will lower suicide rates. Surely patients so inclined will suicide on paracetamol instead. Who makes these silly diktats? GPs on the ground or those who are so busy with committees they have lost touch with the real world?"

An *Eye* reader whose wife was switched to Ibuprofen from Co-Proxamol and who has found it only partially effective said: "It now looks like more patients may unwittingly lose their lives to heart attacks by being forced to take one drug, because another 'safer' drug has been withdrawn because of those who deliberately chose it to kill themselves." Brilliant.

MULTIPLEX

Wembley wobblers



REVELATIONS about the escalating losses and delays facing Wembley stadium builder Multiplex won't surprise anyone familiar with the history of the deal.

In its first move on the British construction market five years ago, the Australian company won the contract to build the stadium with a rock-bottom bid of £326m. The price of the deal soon shot up to nearly £800m, followed swiftly by revelations that Multiplex had received preferential treatment from the company set up by the Football Association to manage the project, Wembley National Stadiums Ltd (then run by Ken Bates).

Rival bidders for the contract were effectively excluded, leading to an absence of any real competition, rises in costs and a damning report from MPs that forced culture secretary Tessa Jowell to admit that "the tendering process was flawed".

It wasn't long into the building work before Multiplex, a notoriously tight-fisted outfit, ran into trouble with one of its main subcontractors. On four separate occasions steel company Cleveland Bridge Ltd had to resort to the building adjudicator to extract payments totalling £2.5m, on one occasion causing substantial delays when Cleveland simply downed tools. Then, when Cleveland was replaced by another steel firm last summer, hundreds of workers went on strike over poorer conditions. Multiplex, meanwhile, continues to sue Cleveland in a desperate effort to claw back some of its losses (which it will add to further if it loses).

More worrying still is the possibility that Multiplex will end up in such trouble at Wembley, which it is building through a British limited liability company, that it might cut its losses and pass them not on to its wealthy Australian parent but back to British taxpayers.

With such a track record – an unfair bidding process, delays, failure to pay sub-contractors – Multiplex is ideally qualified for that other great national sport: the private finance initiative. Sure enough in March, just weeks after the company's most recent defeat at the hands of the building adjudicator, Multiplex won its first PFI contract: the ambitious £340m Greater Peterborough Health Investment Plan, under which it will build and run a new acute hospital and a mental health unit.

PS: The company is no stranger to controversy in Australia either. Two years ago it lost an appeal against a compensation award to the family of one of its employees who was killed by a falling concrete slab. Six years after the event Multiplex was forced reluctantly to part with an extra A$100,000 (about £40,000). The company is also currently under investigation by financial regulators over allegations that it failed to declare its Wembley problems to the Australian stock market promptly.

COUNTRYSIDE PROPERTIES

Drum role

NEWS of the Eye's favourite developer, Countryside Properties. Apartments at Greenwich Millennium Village (GMV), a joint venture between Countryside and Taylor Woodrow in the shadow of the dome, have been the cause of widespread insomnia in their purchasers, and not just because of the size of their mortgages.

One red-eyed resident, Kirk Smith, has reported waking up if his neighbour turns over in bed; Bruce Haswell doesn't bother going to bed until after his neighbour arrives home; and Alan Jones spends the night at a friend's house if his neighbours have people round for dinner.

The "steel stick" construction has the effect of turning the ceilings of the flats into giant drums which amplify the sounds above them. When residents complained, Countryside gave them the brush-off, treating each case as isolated and suggesting that the situation would improve when soft furnishings were moved in.

Alan Cherry, chairman of GMV Ltd and Countryside, wrote to the residents personally: "Countryside has complied with its obligations to you and the other residents who have acquired these apartments. I have to inform you that the company is not prepared to take the matter further." When independent tests revealed that sound in the buildings was reaching 62 decibels, which constitutes a failing of the 1992 building regulations, part E, Mr Cherry, who had previously stated that the flats had complied with part E with a "good pass", changed his tune. Countryside has now agreed to send in its own investigators.

NEWSTRADE

Retail of woe

IF YOU buy *Private Eye* at one of Britain's 54,000 independent newsagents, you might soon have to visit one of the big chains or supermarkets instead if the office of fair trading (OFT) has its way.

The OFT is contemplating breaking up agreements that give newspaper and magazine distributors regional monopolies in return for delivering to all outlets at the same price. While this arrangement gives readers in remote parts of the country access to a wide range of magazines and underpins the healthy independent newsagent sector, it offends the all-important free market enshrined in British competition law.

Under pressure from the big retailers, notably Tesco, earlier this year the OFT examined the distribution agreements and to the delight of the chains and supermarkets opined that, while the agreements could be justified for newspapers, magazine distribution would have to be opened up to competition.

Most experts predict that if this happens the big retail and supermarket groups will take the opportunity to sign cheap distribution contracts, leaving independent newsagents to pay through the nose for their smaller deliveries. The problem will be particularly acute for those outlets in less convenient locations. Estimates of the number of shops that will close as selling papers and magazines simply becomes uneconomical reach 20,000 – another nail in the coffin for many communities hit by post office and bank closures in recent years.

Once the supermarkets control the supply chain they will immediately be able to dictate the range of titles sold and are unlikely to want to support the variety currently on offer. The Periodical Publishers Association estimates that 1,000 magazines could face closure. When a similar rule change was introduced in the US, the number of magazines published almost halved in a few years and one of the dominant retailers, Walmart (owner of Asda), started to make demands on what could be put on covers. Over here, meanwhile, the *Observer* recently reported that Tesco has already asked to see some magazine covers before publication.

The OFT is now considering responses to its initial finding and will make its decision shortly. But Britain's independent newsagents can't be too hopeful of a reprieve from a watchdog whose enthusiasm for the free market is symbolised by the first entry in the register of interests of one of its board members, Rosalind Wright: a shareholding in, er, Tesco.

YOUNG OFFENDERS

Homeless and hopeless

CHILDREN released from young offenders' institutions (YOI) are being forced into homelessness as social services fail to plan how they will house teenagers who are too old to go back into care.

In a landmark case against Caerphilly county borough council (CCBC), Justice Munby (pictured) found "serious failings" in the way social services handled the release of 17-year-old "J".

As well as having learning difficulties, J suffers from depression and paranoia after appalling childhood abuse and drug use. During his sentence he had to be placed on suicide watch. He had been in local authority care since he was 13; and after getting into various crimes was sentenced to a year at Ashfield YOI when he was 16. Since he was 17 by his release date, he was too old to go back into care.

Worried that no accommodation was being arranged for him, J called the Howard League for Penal Reform's legal helpline. Despite the threat of legal proceedings, CCBC fought against the prison service's decision to grant J early release last December for good behaviour, since it had nowhere to house him. He stayed in Ashfield over Christmas and in January was collected from the prison by CCBC and taken to its homelessness unit. All it could offer him was a space in a bed and breakfast hostel in Cardiff, a city where he knows nobody.

Justice Munby described social services' planning for J's future as "hopelessly inadequate," saying: "The pathway plan contained *no* action plan for meeting J's identified needs for training and employment outside Ashfield; it contained *no* action plan for how his identified needs for support in literacy and numeracy might be met after he had left Ashfield; and it contented itself with the anodyne observation that the local authority would 'continue to explore accommodation options in preparation for [his] release'… As a plan to promote J's independence and ensure that he had the necessary support it was little more than worthless."

The problem of adult prisoners released into homelessness is well known and many adult prisons now offer housing advice and support before release. The Howard League is currently representing several other 16 and 17 year olds around the UK, in cases where social services departments have failed to provide any care plan, assessment of needs or to identify accommodation for youngsters who have no family to support them on release (or whose families are incapable of supporting them).

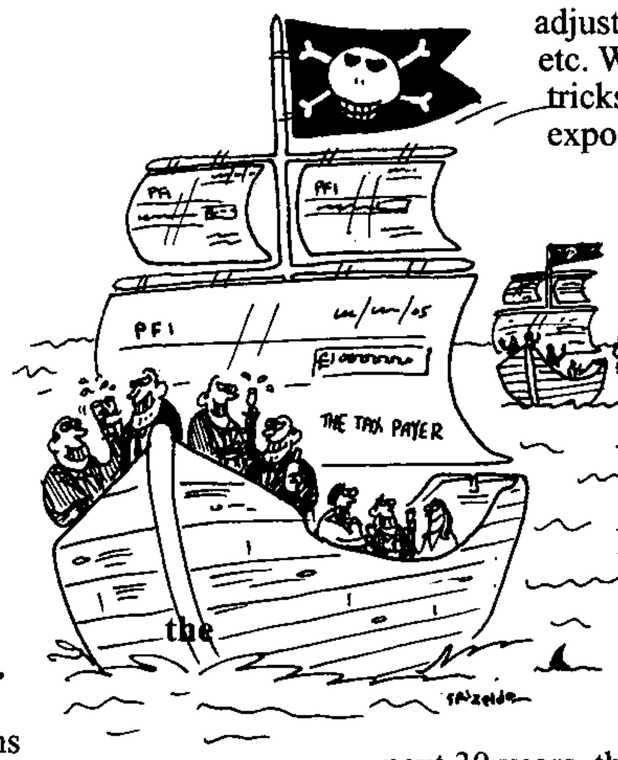
In Birmingham, social services are opposing bail for a 16-year-old girl on remand because they haven't identified any suitable accommodation for her. Her mother is also on remand in the same case, making it difficult to go into details because of the pending trial, but the Howard League has applied for a judicial review of the failure to find her anywhere to stay.

Another 16-year-old girl in Surrey was about to reach the end of her sentence with no needs assessment, no care plan and no accommodation identified. In Buckinghamshire, a 17-year-old was unable to take part in the electronically tagged early release scheme because the county council had made no arrangements for him to be housed. The Howard League is taking both councils to court.

● IN AN item about NOMS supremo, Martin Narey, last issue, we wrote that Bronzefield prison was in Ashfield, Middlesex. It should of course have said, Ashford, Middlesex.

PFI NEWS

Drop in the ocean



WHO SAYS the companies behind the private finance initiative are overpaid? Certainly not the bankers and consultants gathering on the Solent this coming weekend for "PFI Challenge Regatta".

For around £4,000 per team, participants from firms including Balfour Beatty, Deloitte and Laing will enjoy a weekend's yachting and socialising; and £300 from each team will go to the League of Friends of Lymington Hospitals, a worthy cause to which two of the companies – Barclays and PFI specialist Ryhurst Ltd – have particular reason to be grateful. Eighteen months ago their joint venture was awarded a PFI contract to build and run the new Lymington hospital on land paid for out of funds raised by, yes, the League of Friends!

Locals have been waiting years for decent health services. A new community hospital to replace badly dilapidated and fragmented facilities was first approved by the NHS in 1995 after the League of Friends had bought the site for the local health authority for £1.5m. Five years later, however, the PFI proposal to build it was judged not to give value for money and was quietly abandoned, while calls to build a new hospital using traditional procurement (borrowing to pay for it and then owning it) were ignored.

A hasty review, meanwhile, produced what the trust called "a design that was more reflective of the diagnostic and treatment centre model" and, lo and behold, it concluded that PFI should be given another go. In October 2003 the contract was duly awarded to Barclays and Ryhurst.

So why did PFI provide value for money second time round when it hadn't three years earlier? Had the Barclays whizzkids found a new way of doing it? Er, no: the PFI option in fact proved cheaper than traditional procurement only because of the usual fiddle factors like risk adjustment, future payment discounts, etc. Without these spurious accounting tricks, the PFI deal would have been exposed for what it was and remains: tens of millions of pounds *more* expensive.

There will no doubt be much self-congratulation from the PFI bankers and builders handing over cheques for hundreds of pounds to the League of Friends at the regatta dinner in the Royal London Yacht club. But they are unlikely to mention that, compared with the £1.5m stumped up by locals to make the project possible and the millions over the odds that the taxpayer will shell out for the next 30 years, their donations really are drops in the ocean.

Many happy returns

THE national audit office (NAO) has reported on the biggest windfall in PFI history after it examined the "refinancing gain" made by Octagon Healthcare (a consortium of Laing, Barclays, Serco and Innisfree) on one of the *Eye*'s favourite PFI deals: the Norfolk and Norwich Hospital.

Two years ago the private sector companies made £76m from renegotiating the expensive debts they had taken on while the NHS continued to pay £38m a year to the companies based on the original deal, contributing to its own mounting debts. Although the trust took £34m of the £110m total gain, the NAO reported that the trust is still paying over the odds while shareholders make returns of 60 percent, a situation parliament's public accounts committee (PAC) chairman Edward Leigh described as "totally unacceptable".

In what is becoming a familiar approach for NAO reports on PFI, however, the watchdog tempered its findings by accepting without question the department of health's assurances that if the expensive financing had not been used, the project would have been significantly delayed and, with inflation in the construction industry rampant, the deal would have cost pretty much what it did anyway.

This finding was helpfully reached by the Royal Bank of Canada, which must have been relieved to find a justification for the deal. RBC is, after all, a leading PFI financier.

You can bank on PUK

ONE undisputed cost of PFI is that it requires private companies to borrow money much more expensively than the government would be able to.

But the extra cost can at least be mitigated if the company shops around for the cheapest rate, as the national audit office (NAO) found in 2001 when it examined a "funding competition" to get the best rates for the PFI deal to refurbish the treasury offices in Whitehall. The competition produced a whopping £13m saving, equivalent to 7 percent of the project's cost.

Parliament's public accounts committee (PAC) was naturally delighted with this result and in 2002 suggested "funding competitions should always be considered in future PFI procurements". The government agreed and in July that year included the recommendation in PFI procurement guidelines.

Almost three years on, however, it has emerged that only four of the hundreds of PFI deals signed since then, worth tens of billions of pounds, have included any kind of funding competition. If the success of the treasury deal was anything to go by, the waste of money could be enormous, perhaps running to billions.

So how should departments have been encouraged to run funding competitions? This, explained the treasury in 2002, was where Partnerships UK (PUK), the privatised treasury PFI taskforce with an alleged "public sector mission", came in. Its job is to help public sector bodies negotiating PFI contracts get the best deal, including on financing.

PUK is majority owned by companies closely involved in PFI, mainly the banks Barclays, Royal Bank of Scotland, Abbey and HBOS; and its board members are largely bankers.

The obvious question is: why has the banker-dominated PUK failed to ensure the use of funding competitions that could have saved the taxpayer so much money? Nobody knows, but the people who have trousered untold millions as a result are, er, the bankers!

POLICE 5

Aber-ation?

WHEN someone is charged with possession of a knife in a public place, the case rarely attracts much attention. But at Aberystwyth magistrates' court last month, police – who usually leave as soon as they've given evidence – stayed to hear the outcome.

They then appeared unhappy when the case was dismissed, particularly as the man in question had admitted to having a lock-knife in his pocket. So who was the defendant?

He was Eddie Browning, now 52, the former soldier who was wrongly convicted in November 1989 of the horrific murder of Marie Wilks on the M50 motorway. The pregnant housewife had been found with her throat cut after her car had broken down.

After a campaign in which the *Eye*, Paul Foot and the *Independent* all played a part, Browning was finally freed on appeal on 13 May 1994 after it emerged that police had withheld evidence showing that the killer's car was not Browning's.

Browning, a former Welsh Guardsman, now works as a farmhand and had a perfectly reasonable explanation for possessing a lock-knife with a three-inch blade: he uses it to cut bales of hay for cattle.

Police had found the knife in his pocket when they arrested him for alleged drink driving. He told them it was a working tool and that as it had a blade of less then three inches he had no idea it was illegal; but charges were brought against him anyway.

In acquitting him the magistrates said Browning had given a good reason for having the knife: he'd simply forgotten it was in the pocket of his work jeans and had not thought anything of it. They, like the rest of us, may have wondered why their time and taxpayers' money had been wasted.

The murder of Marie Wilks remains unsolved.

Sick joke

FASCINATING to read the self-congratulatory article in the Met Police house journal, *The Job*, on how Knacker's new human resources director Martin Tiplady saved £25m last year by reducing sick leave.

Sick rates among officers have dropped from an average of more than 10 days a year per officer to seven-and-a-half, which is all very laudable. Except that in the years when sickness rates were double that and costing taxpayers hundreds of millions of pounds, no one at the Met or in government wanted to do anything about it.

In fact as *Eye* readers will recall, any officer making waves about the scandal risked wrecking their career. It just wasn't a popular move to question the need for more officers while suggesting it would be more cost-effective to get existing ones back to work.

Inspector John Kenny, who through the 80s and 90s campaigned to lessen absenteeism through sickness, was consistently turned down for promotion to superintendent. The reason? "He seems to have a fixation with absenteeism," said his dossier. Promotion should be refused "until he learns to temper his enthusiasm with professionalism".

That was in 1989. Sixteen years later, the Met has finally realised he was right.

Medal fatigue

GURPAL VIRDI, the Met police sergeant falsely accused of sending race hate mail and subjected to reprehensible treatment by his employers, has finally decided to accept his long service and good conduct medal.

Normally presented after 22 years' service, the award is a year overdue because Virdi, now a detective sergeant, had refused to accept the medal from Scotland Yard's former chief, Sir John Stevens. It was Stevens who authorised the unjustifiable raid on Virdi's home by anti-terrorist officers in 1998.

After a long battle Virdi eventually won substantial damages for the discrimination he suffered at Ealing police station in west London. Since being reinstated into the force he has received further apologies over continued victimisation.

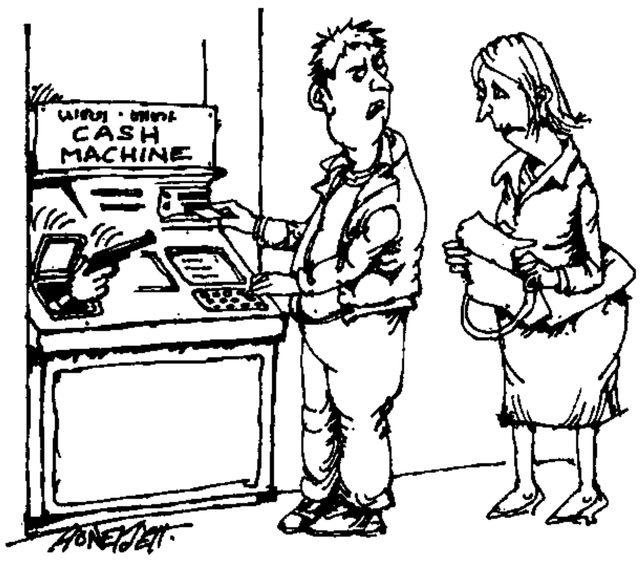
Virdi, a law degree holder, has twice passed his exams to become a police inspector. But his promotion has been blocked from on high, despite the support of his department. His battles for equality and justice aren't over yet, it seems.

In the City

THE much-delayed decision last month by home secretary Charles Clarke to extradite to Texas three former NatWest investment bankers accused of defrauding the bank of more than £3m in a deal with the collapsed energy giant Enron will trigger a legal battle which could run and run all the way to the House of Lords and possibly Europe.

Interwoven with the extradition issue will be a parallel effort by the NatWest Three to force the Serious Farce Office to prosecute them instead of the Americans, thereby blocking extradition. These twin prospects are likely to be both unwelcome and uncomfortable for Royal Bank of Scotland, whose 2000 takeover of NatWest, it is suggested, played a key role in motivating the alleged fraud.

For the remarkable fact is that although the US authorities insist that NatWest was the victim robbed by David Bermingham, Gary Mulgrew and Giles Darby, neither the bank nor its new owner has ever taken any action against the three former executives. This fact will play large in the legal debate as to whether, if there was a fraud, it should be prosecuted in London where they were based, or in Houston, where Enron was based and where the three Britons have been indicted.



"Since when did this one charge for withdrawals?"

The three bankers worked for Greenwich NatWest in London. They are accused of persuading GNW to sell for $1m its stake in a subsidiary of an Enron-linked Cayman Island partnership (really worth $20m) to another Cayman partnership of which they were secret 50 percent owners. Within weeks that same stake was sold and the three bankers shared $2.38m each for an investment of $250,000. All organised while employed by GNW.

US prosecutors declare this pay-off was orchestrated by Enron chief financial officer Andrew Fastow and his lieutenant Michael Kopper who, with other Enron insiders, profited even more from the deal ($4.5m each) at the expense of Enron who paid the $20m. Both Fastow and Kopper have cut plea bargain deals with the US prosecutors. Fastow is going away for ten years. Kopper has yet to be sentenced.

The evidence against the NatWest Three was set out in their 2002 indictment (and detailed in *Eye* 1118) and during the extradition proceedings that began last year. All RBS has said – in 2002 – is that GNW acted "properly" in *its* dealings with Enron.

The Americans argue that fearing Greenwich NatWest was to be sold and that they could be out of a job, the trio decided to line their own pockets when given the chance by Fastow and Kopper. GNW was one of Enron's nine Tier One banks – those prepared to do most in return for big fees. Enron was a major client for GNW who the trio swopped for Royal Bank of Canada.

So RBS has known for a very long time what the case is against the former Nat West employees who had all left the bank by June 2000 following receipt of the $7.3m. As Bermingham has candidly admitted: "The bare facts look horrible." But the trio have consistently denied any wrongdoing and pointed to the lack of action taken by NatWest/RBS as evidence of their innocence – or should it be their alibi?

RBS's continued inaction does raise a lot of unanswered questions. It is also a silence that could not continue if the courts were to decide that the SFO must investigate the alleged $7.3m heist – as the NatWest Three want – instead of leaving it to the US prosecutors. RBS/ NatWest/GNW have never made any complaint to the SFO. If there is to be an SFO investigation, the bank will need to provide documents and witnesses against its former employees. If so it would look extremely odd at any trial if it had made no civil claim for compensation on the basis of breach of duty, never mind fraud, against them.

This it has so far failed to do. Legal experts point out that the usual six-year statute of limitations on such a civil claim could expire next year – possibly before the extradition/prosecution issue is decided – although with fraud that can be extended. If RBS/ NatWest/GNW has made no claim by this time next year, it might be hard to argue that it (but not Enron) was a victim at any criminal trial, either here or in Texas.

So the clock is running for RBS. What may explain this curious silence given the case made by the Enron task force against the NatWest Three? Could it be that it was all a long, long time ago? That none of those responsible at NatWest is any longer at RBS? That it all looks too embarrassing suggesting that first NatWest and then RBS top brass were asleep at the wheel while the bank was being robbed and so better to hope that it just goes away? Or is it that the role GNW and NatWest played in assisting Enron has yet to play out in the civil arena, where Citigroup just paid $2bn to settle claims from Enron shareholders of assisting in fraudulent deals. RBS has inherited similar claims from the same investor group. Opening the can of worms inhabited by the NatWest Three could not be an advantage at this time. Whatever the reason, the issue is unlikely to be allowed to remain dormant for much longer, whoever wins the extradition/ prosecution battle.

As Lord Justice Laws commented in April when ruling that there should be a judicial review of the SFO's decision not to prosecute: "It is surely of the first importance that the actual charge relates only to the NatWest; and that the NatWest has not itself complained of being defrauded."

The SFO's unsurprising decision not to accept the NatWest Three's unique invitation to investigate them but to allow the Americans their shot is now to be subject to a judicial review, along with the home secretary's decision to extradite them. Both raise major legal issues.

For the home secretary the issue is the slavish new 2003 Anglo-US extradition agreement which enables American prosecutors to all but obtain extradition by return for British nationals, while Britain has to go through the whole process of proving there is a case to answer right the way through the US legal system for American suspects. The lack of reciprocity is typical of any decision made by the Dear Leader where the Bush White House is concerned. The Americans say they cannot simply hand over their citizens because of their constitutional rights to a fair trial and due process.

The NatWest Three are likely to test whether the right to a fair trial enshrined in the European convention on human rights does not provide them the same protection – especially given the US treatment of some foreign nationals. This latter point may be less clear cut, however, since the coming into law of the European arrest warrant which effectively sees EU citizens extradited in double quick time to fellow EU states.

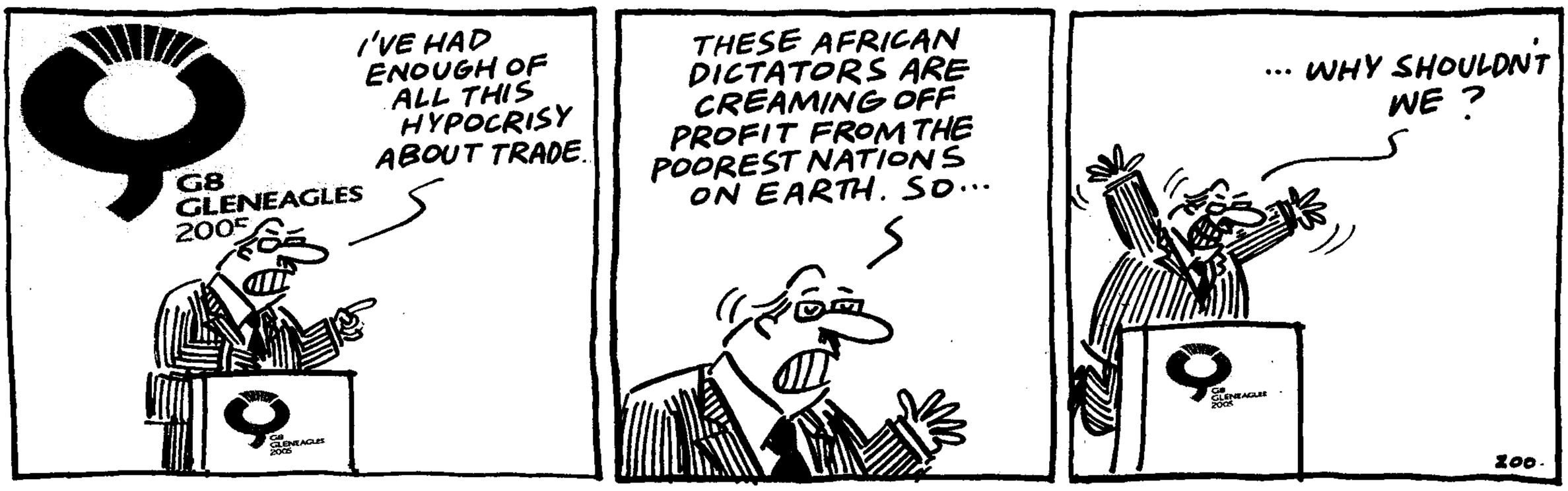
For the SFO the point is whether it, the director of public prosecutions or the attorney-general decides who is to be investigated and prosecuted for serious fraud. This is a whole new issue and may have to be decided by the law lords as it goes to the heart of the SFO's raison d'etre. It was set up by statute to investigate fraud; so the decision as to whom it investigates and prosecutes had been accepted to be a matter for its director, Robert Wardle. But the Laws ruling has now questioned that process.

Now the appeal court or the law lords will have to decide that issue and could require that the SFO investigates the GNW case. But SFO insiders believe the courts do not have the power to dictate whether it must prosecute. That is supposed to be only a decision for the director. Unless it is proposed that the law requires this decision to be taken by the attorney-general (to whom the SFO reports) or the DPP (from which it is independent). Such a ruling would involve a major sea change in how the SFO works (or doesn't) and could put in question who prosecutes fraud.

The SFO case is likely to be that it has looked at the case and decided that the Americans should prosecute because they have much, though not all, of the evidence and, in particular, they have Fastow and Kopper. If extradition were refused, it is feared that an angry US justice department

THE DIRECTORS

DREDGE & RIGG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Stock Horror

by 'Bruin'

Switching the lights back on

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would not cooperate by making either man or materials available even by video link. And without an uncompellable Fastow and Kopper, there could probably be no UK trial. Or not one the SFO could be confident of winning.

The SFO has also raised a further key point. No investigation if ordered is likely to be able to start until the extradition process is completed and it is ruled whether the trio stay or go. It could then take many months to resolve the Fastow/Kopper issue as well as collect the UK evidence. By then it could be 2007 or 2008 and the case would relate to events already seven or eight years old. This would lead to an inevitable application by the NatWest Three that it would be an abuse of process for any UK trial to proceed after so long and so much pain and suffering by the defendants!

Though so eager to see the SFO proceed against them, the trio have not committed themselves to not playing the abuse of process card. But then why should they if the whole elongated debate contains a guaranteed get of jail card either here or Texas?

TORY peer and benefactor Lord Laidlaw is expected to collect more than £700m from the sale of his IIR Holdings conferences and training group to T&F Informa.

IIR is based in the tax haven of Bermuda. However, in April 2004 the Monaco-resident Scot declared that for that new tax year he was ceasing to be a tax exile and would be UK resident for tax purposes for the first time in 22 years in order to take up the offer of a peerage. A road previously travelled by another Tory peer and paymaster, Lord Ashcroft.

So does that mean Laidlaw will be facing a huge capital gains tax bill on the £700m windfall? Unlikely. To begin with, as a full UK resident he would be able to claim taper relief on the sale of a company he founded which would probably cap the tax bill at 10 percent or some £70m. But it is equally unlikely that the noble lord will be that generous in return for his peerage.

Especially as by now he could have established a non-UK domicile of choice and may therefore only be resident rather than ordinarily resident in the UK. In which case he could face tax only on any of the £700m he generously/unwisely decides to remit to the UK.

But changing domicile is hard to do. Much easier is probably the most likely legal solution to this otherwise expensive problem – that old favourite the offshore trust. As someone who was not resident when Geoffrey Robinson forced the last change in the rules regarding offshore trusts for UK residents, Laidlaw would have been able to establish family/discretionary trusts into which ownership of IIR could be safely deposited so long as he was not a direct beneficiary.

If IIR is indeed held through such offshore trusts, it is likely that none of the £700m would be UK taxable unless a distribution were made to Laidlaw in the UK. Phew what a relief!

Still, it would be worth asking whether in the current tax year in which the IIR sale occurs, the noble lord is still UK resident for tax purposes? He has a Belgravia home, but that does not count when it comes to residence. And if so, what if any UK tax he will be paying on this cheering windfall?

'Slicker'

EYE CROSSWORD 290

by Cyclops

£100 prize to first correct solution opened on 1 July2005

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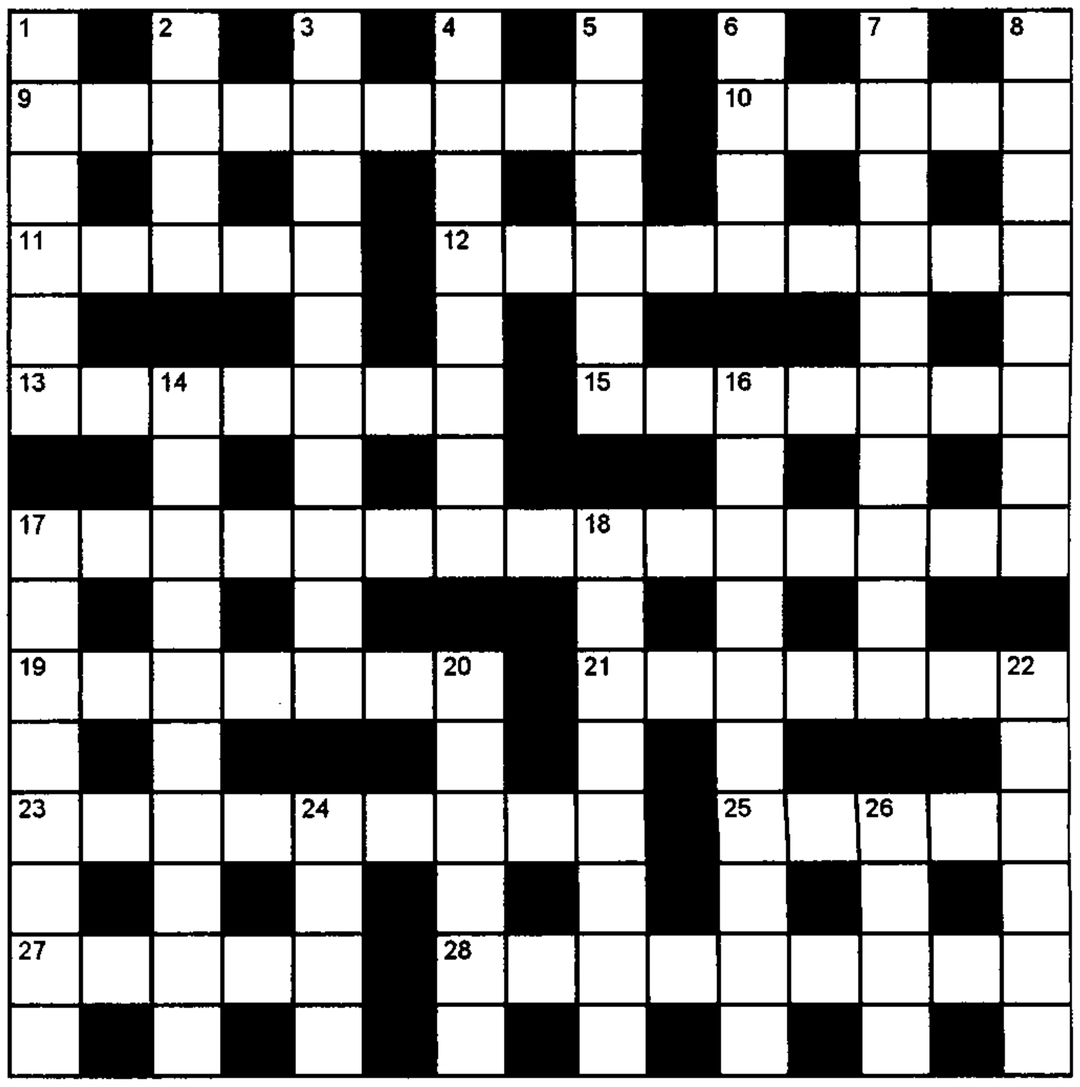


ACROSS

9 During which drinks are downed, showing Joy has a period (5,4)
10 Thirsty? Libation has its points for old writers (5)
11 Lover-boy loses heart, as he might well do on getting hard-on (5)
12 Tap artist disinclined to go away (6,3)
13 Shaft perverted Dicky, the showbiz celeb (7)
15 Cocaine given to the bloke by Brenda on a wild fancy (7)
17 Really seeing the funny side of having an accident? (7,8)
19 Point to Conservative in the clutches of gonad-crunching, angular figure ... (7)
21 ... is unable to stand after day's surgery on testes (7)
23 Faultless bloomer with fancy elasticated top (4-5)
25 Loser's throw-away line following draw, "Ecstasy!" (5)
27 Kisses passionately but stops short of giving head? (5)
28 Someone on record as a maudlin admirer of Di gives Ben something to go on (5,4)

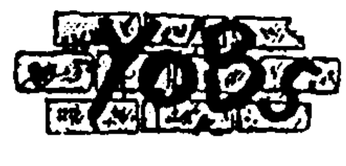
DOWN

1 'Royal Highness getting screwed' myth – a regularly-occurring thing (6)
2 Horny thing sticking out causes football team to drop point (4)
3 Visually challenging magazine, *Shagging US-style* (10)
4 Apply pressure to member of Bob, lying in state of excitement (8)
5 Bringing up Monica's sex aid model is to be deplored (6)
6 Oasis leader possesses no great presence in the main (4)
7 Startling revelations of those turning to Cyclops' crossword, say? (3-7)
8 Rubbish rock theme, "far out" and loud (4-4)
14 Unfortunately not making consul chuck China's leader out (2,4,4)
16 Frigging train rig – it's a pain in the arse (10)
17 Not worth the trouble, being a peer (8)
18 Fancy Desmond Tutu's capital leftovers (8)
20 Actor Jimmy's association with hack exposed as a lie (6)
22 I'm going off such a flattering description of my tool (2,4)
24 Privileged American getting head from William, poor sap (4)
26 It might well get the spin treatment, court official's end (4)

Crossword 289 winner: MICHAEL SMITH

ACROSS: 1/6 Election defeat 9 Step in 10 Symmetry 11 Hard drug 13 Gates 15 Yucky 17 Sonic 20 Greer 22 In situ 23 Celibate 25 Bullwhip 26 Woofer 27 Flashy 28 Throning.

DOWN: 2 Lethargy 3 Cupid 4 Innards 5 Nosegay 6 Demonic 7 Freestyle 8 Arrant 14 Testicles 16 Eritrean 18 Naughty 19 Cockpit 20 Gulf War 21 Annual 24/12 Brown-nosing.



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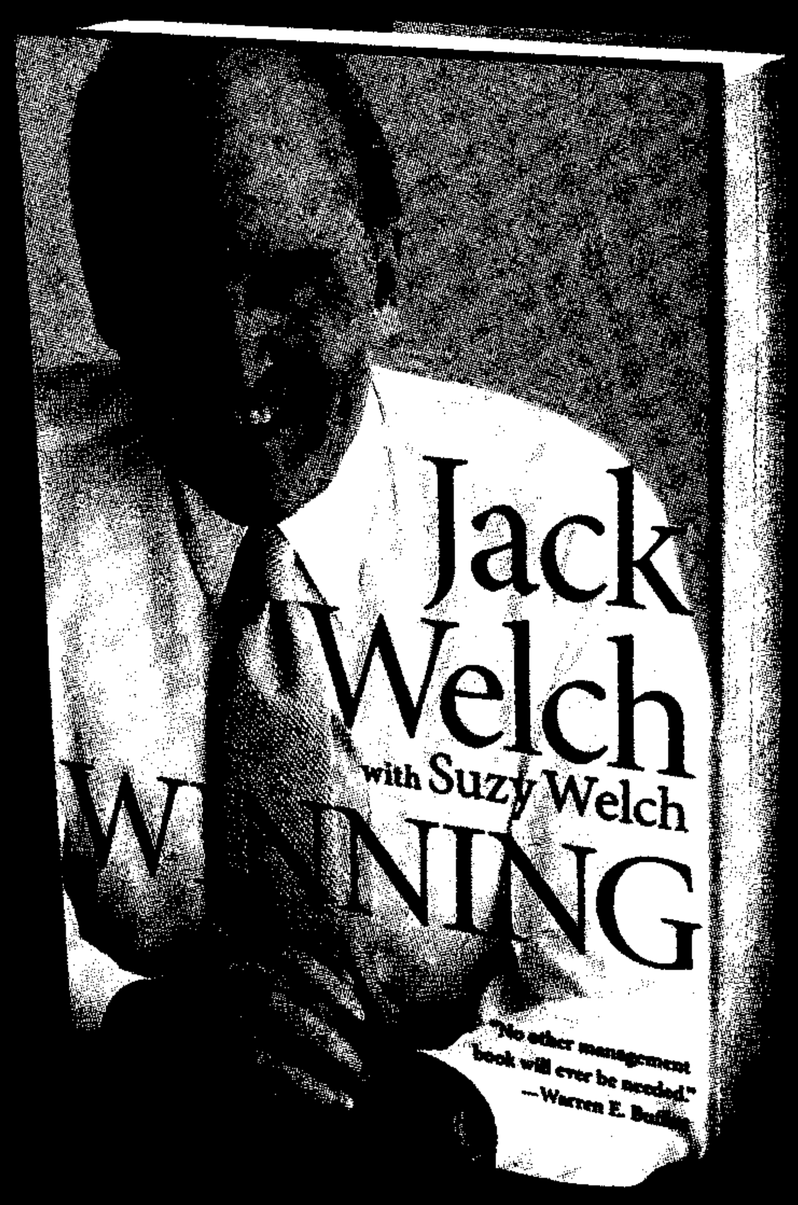

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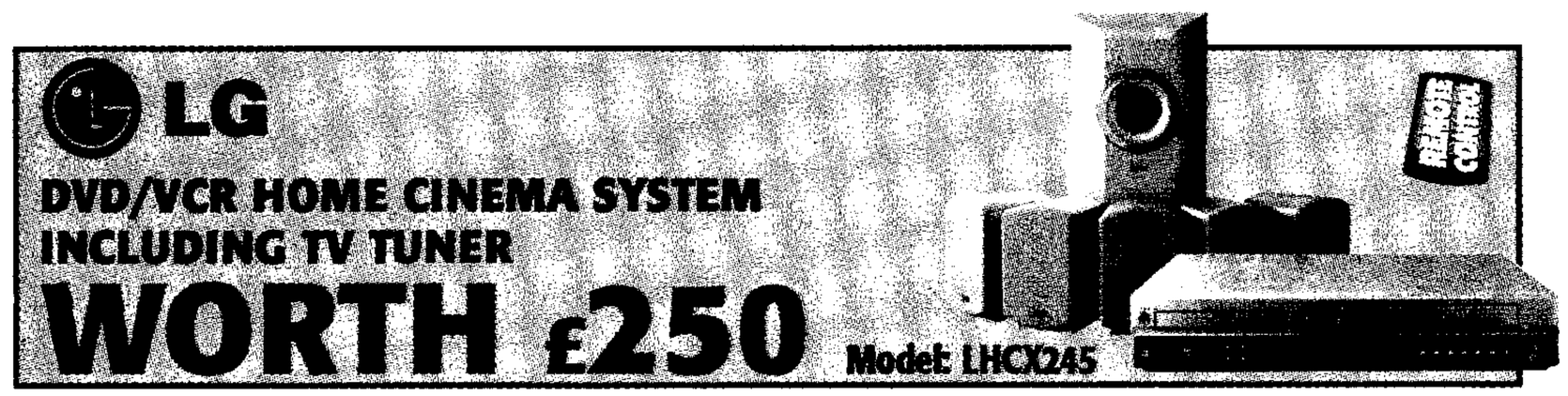

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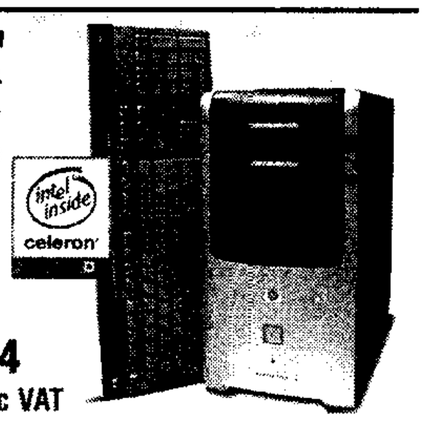

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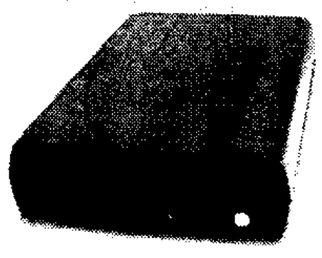

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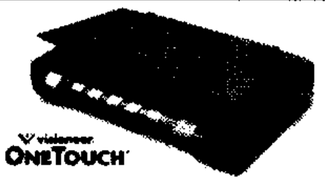

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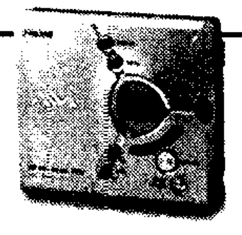

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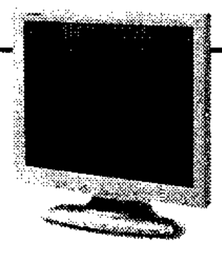

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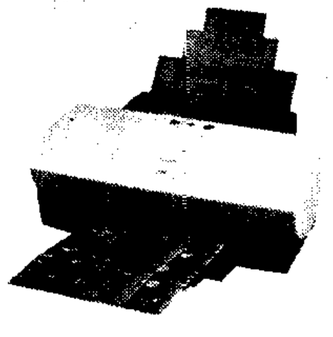

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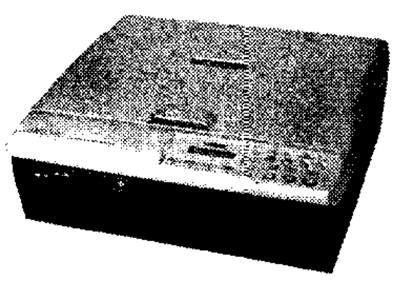

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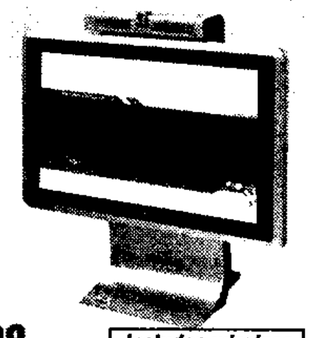

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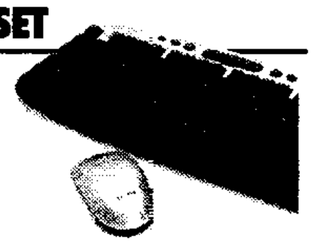

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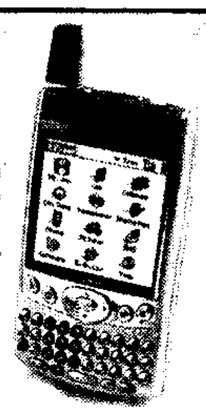

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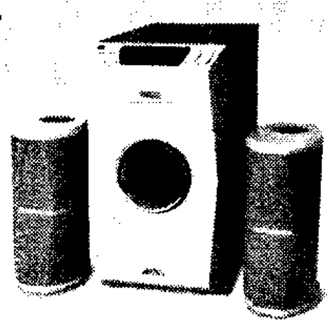

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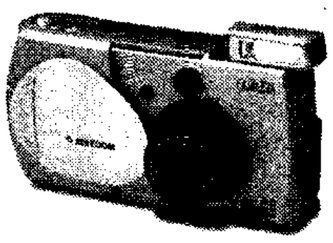

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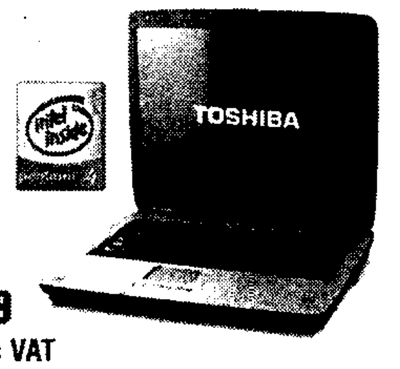

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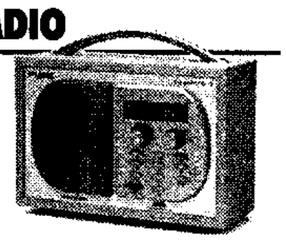

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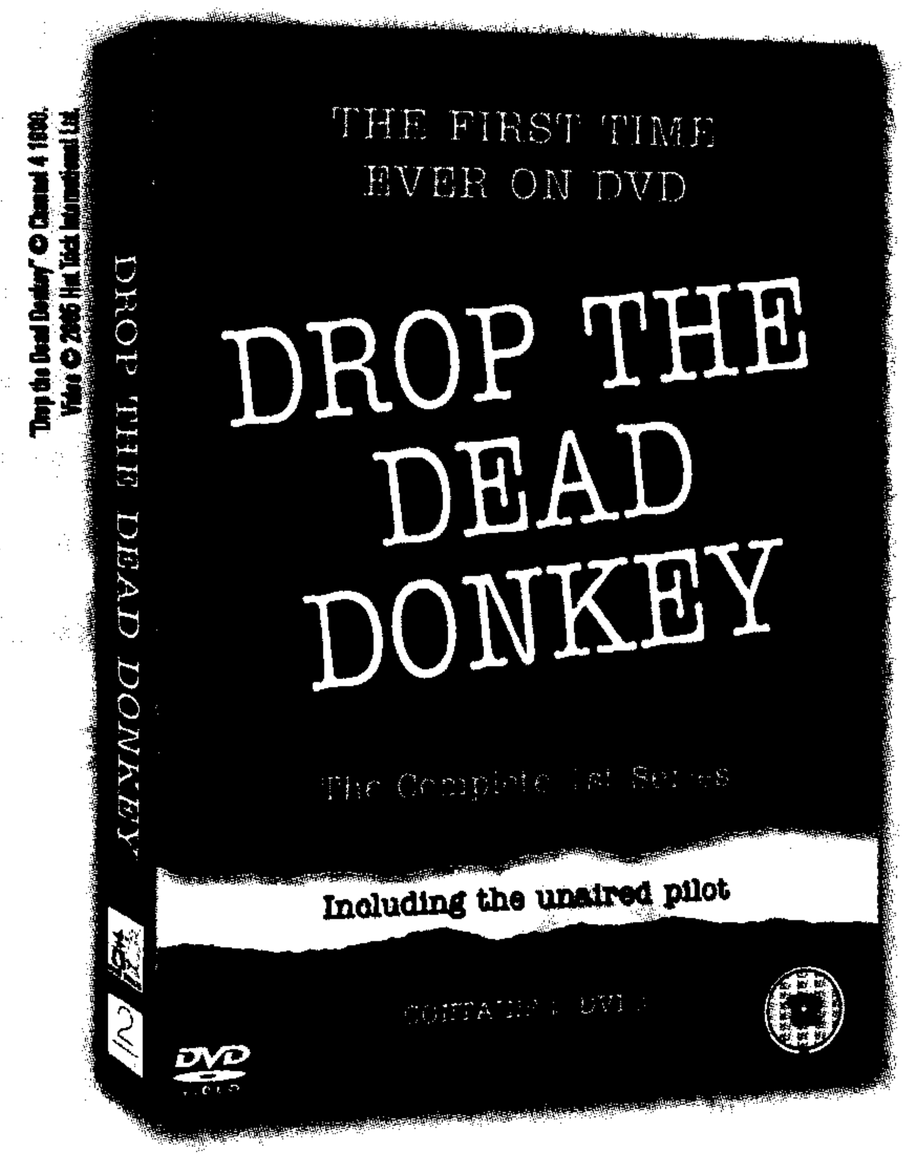

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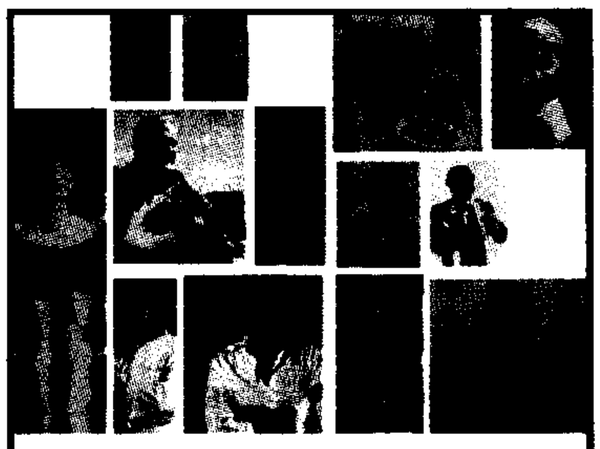

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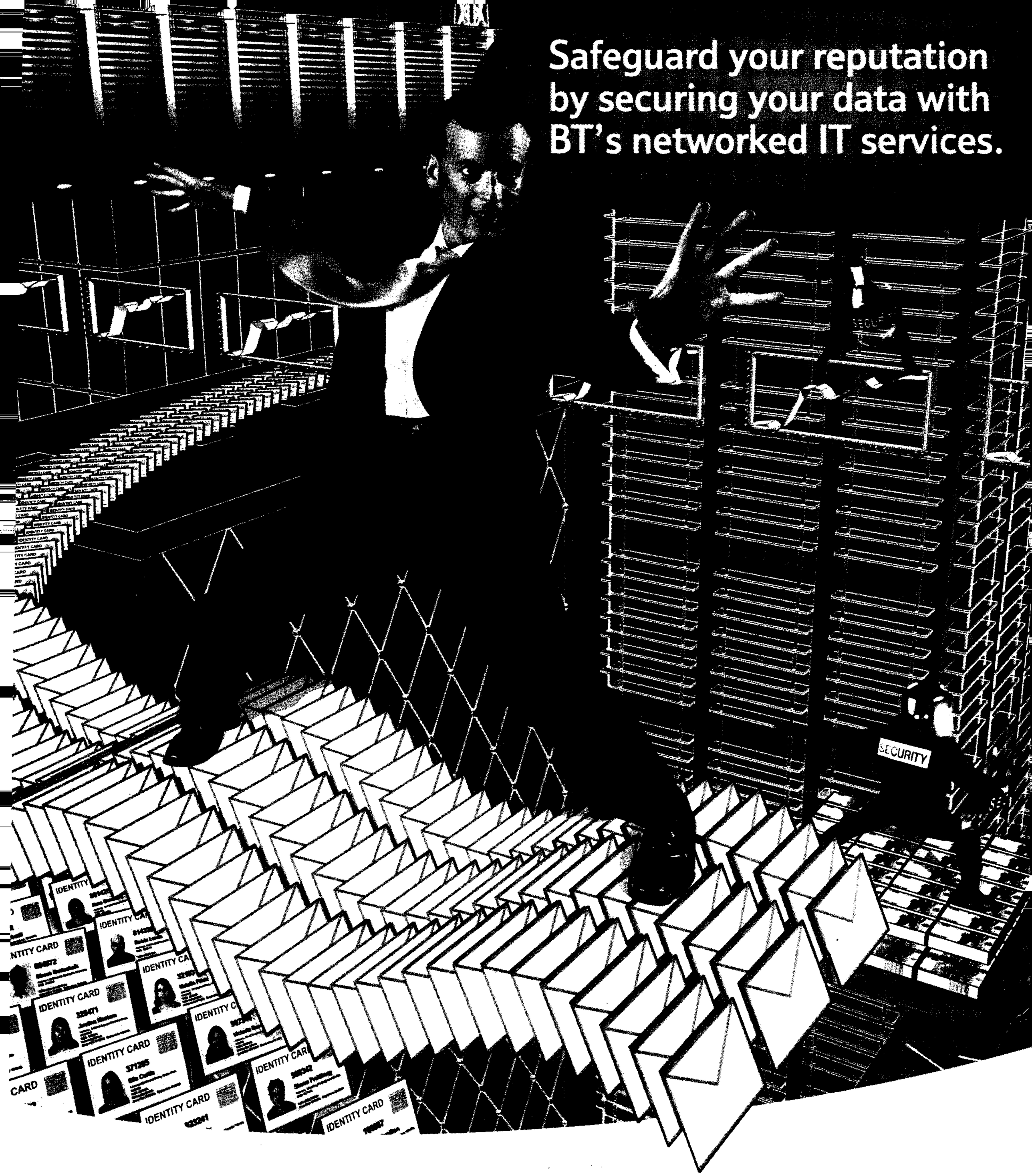

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We agree with the Government that there should be some controls on smoking in public places. However, the majority of people in Britain do NOT support an outright ban, especially in pubs, clubs and bars. What people want are more no-smoking areas, separate rooms for smokers, and better ventilation. Despite this, the plan is to ban smoking in every public place except pubs that don't serve food. And some campaigners would like to go even further. It's excessive, disproportionate and illiberal. So please, Tony, listen to the people and give them what they really want - and that's choice.

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OFFICIAL FUEL CONSUMPTION FIGURES FOR SAAB 9-3 CONVERTIBLE RANGE IN MPG (LITRES/100KM): URBAN 20.2 (14.0) – 24.1 (11.7), EXTRA URBAN 36.7 (7.7) – 42.2 (6.7), COMBINED 28.2 (10.0) – 32.8 (8.6), CO_2 EMISSIONS 206 – 235 G/KM. Model illustrated Saab 9-3 Aero Convertible – on the road price £29,795. All prices correct at time of going to press.